

Jiban Tori begins its voyage today

Jiban Tori (lifeboat), a floating hospital begins its voyage today for the disadvantaged in the country's riverine areas today at Mawa in Munshiganj district, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will inaugurate the hospital of its kind in the country. The hospital is being launched by Impact Foundation, Bangladesh.

State Minister for Health Prof M Amanullah, head of the global impact programme Sir John Wilson, acting resident representative of UNDP Wilbert Van Hovell Impact Trustees Jean Wilson, Egremont, Jeffrey Martin, Captain John Scott, chief executive of the UK Impact Claire Hicks, Chairman of Impact, Bangladesh Safat Ahmed Choudhury will witness, among others, the launching of the hospital.

Martin is the chief designer and physical planner of the 40 metre by 10-metre three decker floating facility equipped with modern surgical and clinical healthcare services for the poor suffering from eye, ear, nose and throat (ENT) and orthopedic complications.

Impact officials said four doctors, five nurses, four technical staff and about six support staff headed by a hospital administrator will be stationed on board.

After a 45 day programme in Mawa, the hospital would conduct three more similar campaigns in Ashuganj, Fenchuganj and Daudkandi this year.

UP chairman jailed in Khulna

KHULNA, Apr 9: The judge of the Khulna divisional special court, Mohammad Azizul Haque, sentenced a union parishad chairman of Paik Gachha, Kiron Chandra Biswas, to five years rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Tk 54 thousand for misappropriation of wheat, reports APB.

Another four accused have been acquitted as allegations against them were not proved. The chairman had misappropriated 328 tonnes of wheat from 1800 tonnes allocated from CARE project-2 for construction of a road under the Food for Work Programme.

Later, the Anti-corruption Department carried out an investigation and charge-sheeted five persons in connection with the case.

Arrest of killers of Kazi Aref demanded

The leaders of the Sammilta Samajik Andolon (SSA) Thursday demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) leader Kazi Aref Ahmed, reports BSS.

They were speaking at a discussion organised by the Dhaka City Unit of SSA to mark the 58th birth anniversary of the slain leader.

The meeting was held at the central office of the SSA with its convenor Chowdhury Khurshid Alam in the chair.

Central convening committee members of the SSA including Ajoy Roy, Dr Zahurul Islam, Subhash Saha, Abul Barakat Dulal and Dr Mijanur Rahman addressed the meeting.

The leaders called for strengthening the movement to establish an exploitation-free democratic and non-communal Bangladesh.

Scarcity of water hampers irrigation in Iswardi

ISWARDI, Apr 9: Fall in groundwater level is threatening irrigation in IRRI-Boro lands in different areas of the district, reports APB.

Sources of surface water have almost dried up in some areas because of lack of rain and continued heat wave, making drinking water scarce.

The worst affected are Iswardi, Chatmohar, Pabna Sadar, Faridpur and Shujana-gar thanas where farmers said their shallow tube wells cannot pump water even after placing the machines some 8 to 10 feet below the surface.

Meanwhile, ferry service is also being hindered at the Paksey-Bheramara ferry terminal because of fall in the water level of Padma, IWTA sources said.

The water level near the North Bengal Paper Mills Zone is also falling. If this fall continues, production in the mill will be affected, sources in the mill informed.

Young woman falls to her death in Banani

A young woman died after falling from a six storied building at city's Banani area Thursday, reports UNB.

Sources said Asma (20), worker of Ayesha Garments, fell from the fifth floor of the factory at 1 am. She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where she succumbed to her injuries in the evening.

The body was sent to morgue for autopsy. The cause behind her fall could not be known immediately.

JS body on Social Welfare Ministry meet held

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Social Welfare Ministry reviewed the progress of implementation of various development projects under the ministry, Thursday reports UNB.

AGM of Sandhani opens

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury yesterday commended the role of Sandhani National Eye Donation Association in the welfare of the mankind, reports BSS.

He was addressing as the chief guest the inaugural session of the annual general meeting (AGM) of the association at the VIP lounge of the National Press Club.

Environment Secretary Syed Marghub Murshed and the association general secretary Dr Munirul Islam Khan also spoke in the opening session presided over the president of the association Ruhul Amin Majumder.

The state minister said Sandhani is providing the people with tremendous social services and the nation would remember this association's pioneering role in creating social awareness.

Eye donation, the state minister said, help kindle the light of life for so many people who lost their eyesight.

Environment Secretary Syed Marghub Murshed also appreciated the contribution of Sandhani in popularising eye donation in the country.

Orientation meeting of journalists held in Khulna

KHULNA, Apr 9: A day long orientation meeting for journalists of the Khulna region on oral dehydration therapy was held at Khulna Press Club organised by UNICEF, Press Club and the district information office today, reports APB.

Some 60 journalists from different local, national dailies and news agencies took part in the orientation meeting.

Humayun Kabir, president of Khulna Press Club, presided over the meeting. The audience was addressed, among others, by assistant director of the Health Directorate of Khulna, Dr Mohammad Abdur Rashid Hawladar, and civil surgeon of Khulna, Dr Mohammad Shukur Uddin Mridha.

BRAC Centre Inn opens

The management of BRAC Centre Inn held a function recently to mark the grand opening of the hotel in the city, reports BSS.

Fazle Hasan Abed, Executive Director, BRAC along with BRAC advisor, directors, elite and clients of BRAC Centre Inn attended the ceremony. The hotel is managed by Hotel Operations Services and Tourism Management Consultants Ltd. (HOST) the first and only professional hotel management company in Bangladesh, a press release said.

BRAC Centre Inn, the new hotel is housed in four floors of BRAC centre at Mohakhali.

30 posts of teachers lying vacant in Carmichael College

RANGPUR, Apr 9: Thirty-five posts of teachers have been lying vacant in Rangpur Carmichael University College since long seriously hampering academic activities, reports UNB.

College sources said out of total 167 posts, 10 posts of Professor, 10 of Associate Professor, 12 of Assistant Professor and three of Lecturer have been lying vacant for years.

Besides, the post of Vice-principal became vacant one year ago. The post of Physical Instructor had been lying vacant for six years and that of the Librarian for over a decade.

The college students demanded through protests recently that authorities concerned fill-up the vacant posts immediately.

Foundations laid for 3 bridges in Faridpur

FARIDPUR, Apr 9: Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury today called upon the people to remain alert against attempts of creating anarchy in the country by the anti-liberation and reactionary forces, reports UNB.

The minister in her speech also said the people will reject the anti-development and anti-people politics of the opposition.

The people will unitedly resist them who are out to create anarchy through unruly alliance," said the minister while laying foundation stones of three bridges here today. The bridges will be built on Hatkrishnapur, Gopalpur and Harekandi canals in Nargarkanda thana.

Local UP chairmen, leaders of local Awami League and its front organisations and officials concerned were present.

Former Korean president's son acquitted

SEOUL, Apr 9: South Korea's highest court today acquitted the son of ex-president Kim Young-Sam of corruption charges, overturning a three-year jail sentence, witnesses said, reports AFP.

In lower court hearings, Kim Hyun-Chul admitted milking political funds from businessmen, but he argued that payments were made as political donations with no strings attached.

He was jailed in June 1997 for influence-peddling and tax evasion, and released on bail five months later.



Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote brought out a procession in the city yesterday hailing Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her winning the UNESCO peace prize. — Star photo

\$ 60.06m earned from EPZs in Dhaka, Ctg in July '98-Feb '99

Eighteen industrial units with a proposed investment of 60.06 million US dollars were registered with the Export Processing Zones at Dhaka and Chittagong from July last year to February this year, reports BSS.

Officials at the Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) told BSS yesterday that of the 18 units, eight were owned by South Koreans and the other ten by Hong Kong, US, Singapore, UK, Italy, Taiwan and Bangladesh itself.

They said the investment trend in the Export Processing Zone areas was much more encouraging despite global economic recession during the last couple of years.

The cumulative investment in Dhaka and Chittagong Export Processing Zones is 347.35 million US dollars up to January this year. The country-wise investment up to January this year is, Bangladesh 59.89 million US dollars, US 14.65 million, Hong Kong 46.39 million, Japan 59.92 million, Pakistan 1.99 million, Malaysia 5.4 million, Thailand 0.52 million, Germany 2.92 million, UK 10.52 million, Denmark 0.41 million, South Korea 135.24 million, UAE 0.20 million, China 1.05 million, Taiwan 0.97 million, Singapore

5.15 million, France 0.75 million, Panama 1.20 million and India 0.09 million US dollars.

The officials said BEPZA exported goods worth 636 million US dollars which is 12.32 per cent of the country's total export of 5164 million US dollars in the 1997-98 fiscal year. Pointing out the upward trend of exports from the EPZs, the BEPZA officials said export target for the current fiscal has been set at 800 million US dollars, of which 347 million dollars have been achieved till January.

In Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs, 126 industrial units are in full operation employing approximately 76,000 workers, another 113 industries are in different stages of construction under both foreign and local initiatives, the officials said.

BEPZA sources also said that inspired by spontaneous responses from foreign investors, the government has approved three more new EPZs in Mongla, Ishwardi and Comilla. Feasibility studies on two others at Syedpur and Sirajganj are going on.

These new EPZs are at different levels of implementation, they said.

BEPZA officials said the EPZs of the country, with all services and other facilities,

have been made attractive sites for setting up industries. Other factors related to production like gas, raw materials and transportation costs are also very low in Bangladesh, they added.

The incentive package offered by the government stands out to be the most competitive among those offered by other countries, BEPZA officials said, adding that the changing economic and political condition in the Asian region was prompting many to reassess their investment strategies and plan relocation of new investments.

Noted economist Prof Mozaffar Ahmed told BSS that the EPZs import raw materials from the industrialised countries which are processed and re-exported. The zones are usually enclaves where factories specialised in single-type products like textiles, garments and electronics have become key features of the drive to globalise the economy.

Prof Ahmed urged the government to formulate future strategies for foreign investment considering multiplier effect on economy regarding technology transfer, the setting up of backward linkage industries, employment generation

Hasina greeted for winning UNESCO award

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote yesterday congratulated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her winning the UNESCO peace award for establishing peace in Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports BSS.

The Jote members held a rally at Ramna Park gate in the city. The speakers said the UNESCO peace award given to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had recognised her active role to bring an end to the long-standing armed conflicts in the CHT region.

They said establishment of peace in the CHT region is an example which can be followed anywhere in the world.

With the Jote president Alamgir Kulkarni in the chair, the rally was addressed by its general secretary advocate Tarana Halim and other Jote leaders.

The speakers said the winning of UNESCO peace award by Sheikh Hasina has brightened the image of Bangladesh afresh in the world after father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won the Julo Curie peace award.

They referred to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's political wisdom and farsightedness and said her contribution towards resolving basic problems of the country would be written in golden letters in the history of Bangladesh.

The Jote leaders described this highly prestigious award to Sheikh Hasina as the victory of the people of Bangladesh.

Memorial meeting on Dr Sharif held

Writers, academics and civil rights activists yesterday said Professor Dr Ahmed Sharif was a pioneer in different social movements including ensuring freedom of thought and conscience, creation of 'scientific vision among the youth', continuous campaign for the rights of the have-nots and campaign for elimination of fundamentalism, reports BSS.

They said as the first president of Bangladesh Lekhok Shibir, Dr Ahmed Sharif always fought against the ruling elite and the oppressive intellectual discourses which tried to deprive the have-nots from their basic human rights and privileges guaranteed by the Bangladesh constitution.

Professor Shawkat Ali chaired the memorial meeting in the auditorium of the Institute of Modern Languages of Dhaka University yesterday afternoon.

Noted writer Badruddin Umar, Professor Dr Shirajul Islam Chowdhury, Ahmed Shaifa, journalist Syed Abul Moksud, writer Mesbah Kamal, Professor Dr Humayun Azad and the son of late Ahmed Sharif Dr Nehal Karim, among others, participated in the discussion.

The writers said a deep void has been created in the progressive intellectuals' arena by the death of Dr Sharif.

They opined that the professor was not only the author of more than 40 basic texts on Bengali language, but also a scholar on medieval Bangla literature and a wonderful university teacher with many uncommon qualities.

Death anniversary

The ninth death anniversary of noted music director and singer of radio and television Md Shamsud-doha will be observed today, says a press release.

A quran khwani followed by *midat mahafil* will be held at 22/4, Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur, after Asr prayers.

Zahurul Haq takes over as UGC chairman

By DU Correspondent

Economist Dr ATM Zahurul Haq took over as the Chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC) on Thursday, said a press release.

Prior to his joining UGC, he was the Chairman of the Dhaka Water and sewerage Authority.

Over 60 research articles of Dr Haq were published in various prestigious journals at home and abroad. He has also five valuable books on economics to his credit.

A teacher of the Economics Department of DU, Prof Haq is a life member of Bangladesh Economic Association, fellow of the Institute of Asian and Pacific Development and member of Bangladesh Geographical Society.

Alcohol more dangerous to foetus than smoking

LONDON: A pregnant woman who drinks just four glasses of wine a week risks damaging the brain of her baby, according to new research, with alcohol apparently more dangerous to the foetus than smoking, reports AFP.

Researchers at the Queen's University, Belfast, found evidence of neurological damage by testing the so-called "startle response" of fetuses, they told the British Psychological Society meeting in the city Thursday.

It involved sounding a buzzer against the mother and checking the reaction of the foetus in her womb with ultrasound.

A healthy foetus would respond immediately, extending its limbs, straining its back and turning its head before returning to a resting position.

That is what was seen in 70 per cent of women who neither smoked nor drank alcohol.

But among smokers and drinkers only 32 per cent of foetuses acted normally.

The rest either did not react at all or responded in a half-hearted fashion.

Jennifer Little, who conducted the research on 129 mothers, said it showed both smoking and drinking damaged the brain stem.

The results also showed that alcohol on its own had a more profound effect than smoking on its own, she added.

Her findings suggested that as little as four or five units of alcohol a week, equivalent to about four glasses of wine, can be harmful.

"The results suggest some degree of neurological dysfunction," Little told the conference. "We know children of women who smoke and drink do suffer from neuro-behavioural deficiencies, such as hyperactivity and lower IQ."

The smokers had about 15 cigarettes a day, which is quite heavy in pregnancy, but the majority of drinkers consumed moderate amounts of alcohol.

This would suggest that even low levels of alcohol can do damage during pregnancy.

She said it would be a good idea to introduce health warnings for alcohol similar to those issued for tobacco.



Students of Maple Leaf International School performing a number at a cultural programme, "Banglar roop dekhiachi ami" featuring the seasons, at the school auditorium recently.

Weather

Thundershowers likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Barisal and Chittagong divisions with isolated hails over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Met Office said west-northwesterly *Kalbatshakhi* squall speeding 60 to 70 km is likely to occur over the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, Dhaka, Tangail, Comilla and Sylhet during the next 18 hours.

The country's highest temperature yesterday was recorded at 36.0 degree Celsius at Sitakunda and the lowest 18.0 degrees at Dinajpur.

The sun sets today at 6:18 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:41 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	31.0	21.2	57	68
Chittagong	34.0	24.5	73	86
Rajshahi	34.0	24.5	-	-
Khulna	33.3	21.6	64	71
Barisal	33.0	20.2	63	94
Sylhet	32.0	21.0	77	63
Cox's Bazar	34.2	22.0	64	-

Fingers of young man cut off at Sayedabad

A man was seriously injured when fingers of both his hands and tendons from one hand were cut off at Dayaganj area in Sayedabad in the capital/Thursday reports UNB.

Family sources said, Mizanur Rahman Nayan, 25, resident of South Katrul under Cantonment thana, went to the house of his second wife Shantana at Dayaganj at noon.

Relatives of Shantana allegedly cut off four fingers of both of his hands and tendon of left hand. The reason behind the incident could not be known.

Outgoing UNFPA official calls on Samad Azad

The outgoing representative of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) to Bangladesh Alain P Mouchiroud Thursday called on Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad at his office, reports BSS.

Alain introduced Shu Yun Xu, the newly-appointed UNFPA representative to Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad.

They discussed matters relating to UNFPA's population programme currently being implemented in Bangladesh and its future programmes.

Arsenic contamination acute in 6 thanas of Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Apr 9: Arsenic has been detected in the water of almost all the tubewells in the six thanas of the district, according to Basanta Kumar Joarder, Executive Engineer of district Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), reports APB.

The problem is acute in Shaikluppa and Maheshpur thanas, where over 500 people are suffering from arsenic-induced diseases like skin cancer, malfunction of kidney and liver, gangrene, lung ailments, Joarder said.

He said that water in about 96 per cent of the tubewells in the two thanas is infected with arsenic, he said.

The allowable limit of arsenic per litre is 0.01 mg, but as much as 0.32 mg was found in tubewell water in the area, he said.

There are about 16,000 tubewells, put in by the government, in the six thanas and nearly an equal number done privately.

After detection of arsenic, 50 tubewells were sealed in Shaikluppa, 40 in Maheshpur, 16 in Kaliganj, 10 in Hari-nakunda, six in Kotehandpur and 21 in Jhenidah sadar thana. At least 50 more will be sealed in Maheshpur and Shaikluppa thanas.

Joarder said, the PHED needs more equipment to de-arsenic.



Students of the Architecture Department of BUET on the third day of their fast-unto-death programme at noon yesterday. Later in the evening they withdraw their programme following requests from eminent citizens of the country. — Star photo

Discussion meet on agricultural dev held in Panchagarh

PANCHAGARH, Apr 9: A discussion meeting on agricultural development was held in the conference room of the district's deputy commissioner on Wednesday, reports APB.

Divisional Commissioner Khan Shahabuddin and manager of the Agricultural Development Bank Yamini Ali were present as chief guests.

The importance of providing timely loans to the farmers was highlighted at the meeting.

TNOs, all UP chairmen and managers of 16 branches of the bank were also present.

OC of Araihaazar thana suspended

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 9: The officer-in-charge of Araihaazar police station of the district has been suspended on charge of torturing four accused in police custody, sources said.

The order of suspension was issued on April 7.

According to sources, the action has been taken on the basis of a report of the special inquiry committee formed to probe allegations of torture by Kazi Habibur Rahman. The four accused were arrested in connection with a dacoity case.

The accused are Kalu, 35, Moti, 28, Abdur Rob, 28, and Henuarul Islam, 20.

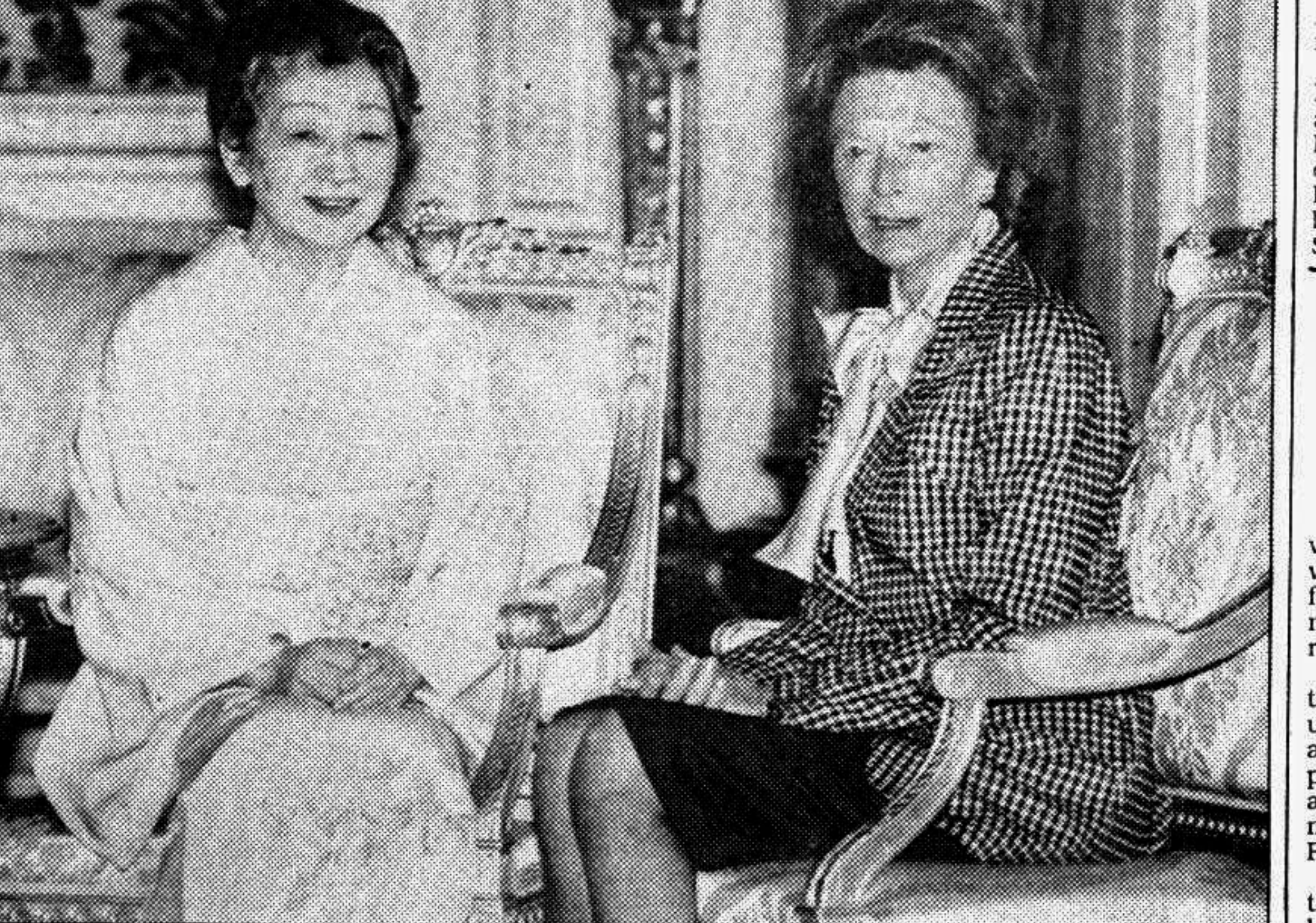
Soma Mumtaj awarded PhD from Calcutta

M S Soma Mumtaj, a lecturer of Jahangirnagar University was awarded a PhD degree in dance from Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta recently, reports BSS.

She completed her PhD under Dr Gayatri Chattopadhyay on 'Impact of socio-economic condition on the folk dances of Bangladesh' with special emphasis on Garo tribe.

Soma Mumtaj, the first Bangladeshi to get a PhD in dance, did extensive research in the Garo tribe in Bangladesh.

Earlier, she obtained her bachelor and master degrees in dance from Baroda University.



Luxembourg's Grand Duchess Josephine Charlotte (R) shares a smile with Japanese Empress Michiko (L) during a farewell call at the Akasaka guesthouse in Tokyo April 9. Grand Duke Jean and the Grand Duchess are on a 10-day's state visit to Japan. — AFP photo

Zahurul Haq takes over as UGC chairman

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Over 60 research articles of Dr Haq were published in various prestigious journals at home and abroad. He has also five valuable books on economics to his credit.

A teacher of the Economics Department of DU, Prof Haq is a life member of Bangladesh Economic Association, fellow of the Institute of Asian and Pacific Development and member of Bangladesh Geographical Society.

Iraq vows to continue firing at planes over no-fly zones

BAGHDAD, Apr 9: Iraq today vowed to continue firing at western planes patrolling no-fly zones over the southern and northern parts of the country, reports Reuters.

"Iraq is determined not only to defy the US-British coalition aggression on its lands but also endeavours to inflict any possible heaviest damage to the aggressors," Al-Thawra, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath Party said.

Thawra also put blame on the United Nations for its silence over the US and British airstrikes against Iraqi military targets which became commonplace after Baghdad decided in December to attack US and British jets patrolling

the zones.

"The UN should notice that the continued overlooking of the US and British air aggression means the international body is evading its obligations and duties," the paper said.

Iraq does not recognise the no-fly zones, set up after the 1991 Gulf war to protect Kurds in the north and Shi'ite Muslims in the south from possible attack by Baghdad's forces.

Baghdad said on Thursday its air defences opened fire at western warplanes patrolling the south of the country.