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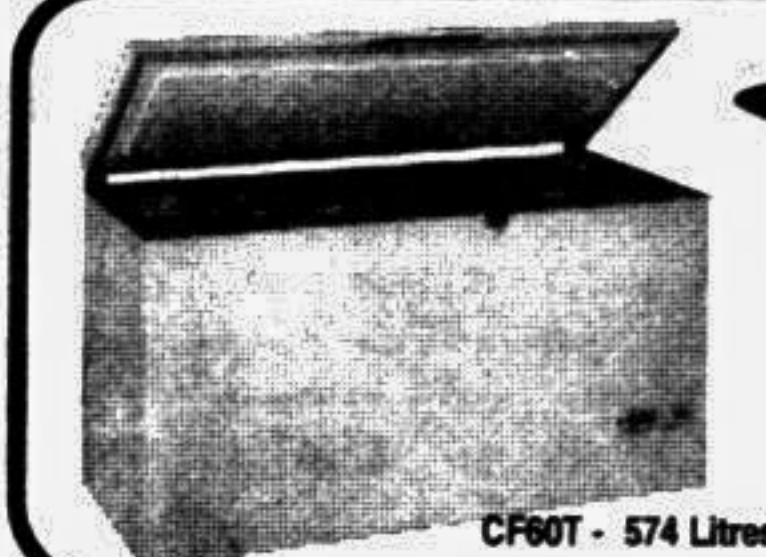
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## Chinese aircraft

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However, when the process was going on through the DGDP, a proposal came from the Russian government for supply of MIG-29s at a "cheaper price and on convenient financial terms."

The authorities then decided to procure the MIG-29s and deferred purchase of Chinese M-7 MBs for two years for financial reasons.

Both the ministries of finance and defence are now considering giving a go-ahead to the plan for procurement of the Chinese fighters, the sources said.

The ministries are tight lipped about the details they are working on. But it was learnt that they would insist on fresh offers, and also on making it a government-to-government deal.

Highly placed defence sources hinted that the Chinese government was interested in making revised offers and could reduce prices "considerably", agreeing on "very easy and convenient terms".

The sources hinted that the Chinese government could offer to supply eight F-7 MBs on deferred payment, considering the "friendly ties" between the two countries.

The Bangladesh Air Force currently has fully trained pilots and a set-up to fly five squadrons, each having 16 fighters. However, its depleted fleet now has only three operational fighter squadrons.

The current fleet comprises Chinese A-11 ground attack aircraft, F-7 MB attack and defence fighters and Czech manufactured L-39 jets. It has some useless and obsolete MIG 21s, procured long ago. It also possess two dozen helicopters—US made Bells and Russian Mi-17s.

Bangladesh is boosting its Air Force fleet by adding half a squadron fighters within March next year with the procurement of eight MIG-29s, the first two of which arrived on December 25.

## Police-picket

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witnesses said. At least 20 people were injured there, police and witnesses said.

About 30 people were injured in another clash between police and hartal activists at Bahaddar crossing at 1-30 pm. The injured included two sub-inspectors of police identified as Abul Kalam and Mohammed Sohail respectively.

A motor cycle and a rickshaw were set on fire in the Fakirhat area by pickets this morning, police and witnesses said.

Clashes between police and pickets also took place at Nur Ahmed road, Kazi Dewri, Chawkbazar and Anderkilla, witnesses said.

Normal life was disrupted during the hartal while most of the vehicles stayed off the roads. Shops and markets remained closed. Deliveries of goods to and from Chittagong port remained suspended during hartal, port sources said.

UNB reports: The city liaison committee of the opposition alliance met in the afternoon with BNP leader Meer Mohammad Nasiruddin in the chair. Momtazul Haq Chowdhury and Maulana Abu Taher of Jamaat, Jahangir Alam of Jatiya Party, Dasgupta Chowdhury of BNP and Abdur Rahman Chowdhury of IOJ attended the meeting.

The meeting viewed with serious concern the extent of police atrocities on the opposition leaders and activists. It regretted that opposition activists were not allowed to hold rally anywhere in the city today.

"Despite such police action, we shall not allow holding of the election. We shall resist the polls even at the cost of our blood," declared Nasiruddin after the meeting.

Meanwhile, Mayor-elect unopposed ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury came out during the hartal under heavy police guard and had a number of rallies campaigning for the election.

He urged the people to resist the opposition trying to create chaos and advised them to vote for the competent candidates in January 3 CCC polls.

Meanwhile, Jamaat leader Shamsul Islam was sent to jail hajrat yesterday by a lower court.

After the arrest Shamsul Islam was lodged in Double Mooring thana which came under bomb attack by Jamaat activists at midnight Sunday night. He was soon transferred to Kotwali thana for security reason.

Kamal Hossain, a Jamaat activists, was arrested for the bomb attack on the thana.

Police said Shamsul Islam was involved in armed attack on police and Awami League meeting since October last. He was arrested on five counts.

## Speaker

From page 1  
Bangabhaban to apprise him of the next coming Parliament session.

In the opening session, every New Year the President addresses the Parliament as per provision of the Constitution.

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# Tougher policing fails to curb pre-Eid crimes

Serious crimes like mugging, hijacking, extortion and robbery in city are on the rise despite stronger police patrols ahead of the millennium and Eid celebrations.

Twenty platoons of additional police have been deployed on the city streets to cure the incidents, officials said. But an unofficial record reveals that over a hundred incidents of mugging and hijacking are taking place everyday on average in the capital.

Some of the safe sanctuaries for the muggers so reported the victims to UNB, are Sat Masjid Road, Central Road, Bijoy Sara, Hatirpool, market areas, Sayedabad to Khilgaon on Biswa Road, Rampura, roads around Ramna Park and Malibagh Bazar area.

Most of the incidents are not reported to the relevant police stations as the victims alleged that police could not do anything about the incidents they have so far come to know.

"Muggers have a chain in capitals, they are not isolated," one of the informed sources told UNB.

Even police know how many muggers are active in the capital and at which points they are committing the acts, said several police officials, both incumbent and retired.

To back their observations, they cited the arrest of Kargali Zakir, a diabolic ring leader of muggers of Motiheel area, who is now in jail.

He was caught only after the killing of police sergeant Ahmad allegedly by his dreaded crime-syndicate brigands. "It means that police knew the criminal before," said one of the sources.

"If not, how police knew his name after the killing of sergeant Ahmad?" a lawyer questioned talking to UNB.

One of the victims complained that she had now into muggers thrice during the last few months on Sat Masjid Road near Road Number-15 bus stand at Dhanmondi but police told

her they could not trace the felons as they roam different parts of the city.

Contacting various sources, the news agency came to know about 50 incidents of mugging in Sat Masjid Road areas alone in last 15 days.

When contacted yesterday, Dhanmondi thana duty officer said they were not aware of any specific place being used so often for mugging.

Some officers-in-charge of DMP admitted that such-jump-and-grab incidents increased, but they were also active to rein in and resist them.

Alongside the street swoops, there are also organised extortions fleeing the businessmen. "Virtually, the businessmen are hostage to extortionists," said one at Mouchak Market shopping mall, preferring not to be named.

On Sunday afternoon, three employees of a shoe factory at Kaptanbazar were chopped by the extortionists as they refused to pay the gangsters Tk 20,000.

# BCL leaders bickering

From page 1  
"Misreading of the issue rather served the cause of Siddique... It has been counterproductive."

Differing, another said, "After such a treatment, Kader Siddique will not continue his relationship with the anti-Liberal forces."

The planned attack on Siddique's party-launching was being widely discussed at the DU campus since it took place three days ago at the premises of Institution of Engineers.

The DU faculty members in general were averse to the vandalism, involving some of the students of the university. Others tried to understand how could it happen in the broad daylight. Yet a few others seemed enjoying the outcome of the operation.

The issue remained 'talk of the campus' until yesterday. Teachers, students and members of the staff of the univer-

sity were found talking for and against the incident.

"We definitely condemn any act of terrorism, no matter who does it... Such an attack is not desirable in a democracy," said Prof M Shahadat Ali, the DU pro-vice chancellor.

Prof Ali also called for punishment to those responsible.

Prof Yusuf Haidar, the outgoing President of DU teachers' association, said: "Nobody can accept such a heinous attack. It is certainly condemnable."

Prof Haidar continued, "If the Dhaka University students were involved in the act, it had certainly damaged the image of the country's highest seat of learning."

BNP-backed JCD leader, ABM Mosharrar Hossain called it a heinous act by the BCL activists. "This is not a demonstration of democratic tolerance."

Attacks on the opposition parties are nothing new for the ruling party and its stu-

dents' front."

The general students, not interested in active politics, sharply reacted to the incident.

"Any citizen of an independent country has the right to do politics. We cannot accept such an attack only because of political differences," commented Ashrafur Islam Mohsin, an MA student of DU's Department of Information and Library Science.

"It's not surprising in a society where tolerance in politics is lacking. But it is a clear act of hatred and violation of democratic and human rights," said Amily Rahman, another MA student of political science.

Kabir Mahmud of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism said: "It is shameful that the government itself was found involved in the armed attack. What else can we expect from this government, which is supposed to check such incidents."



Tender brigade

Riot police guard the Nagar Bhaban against the threat of violence from rival gangs fighting for control of lucrative city contracts.

— Sta. photo

## DCC receives bids in presence of gun-totting goons, cops

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday received tender bids for a project in zone-5 in the presence of large number of uniformed and plainclothes policemen.

"We asked police to be present during the dropping of schedules, and there was no untoward incident as feared," said an official of the DCC's zone-5.

There have been series of clashes over the project between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League since December 12. Armed activists of the feuding factions of ruling Awami League's student front camped at the Nagar Bhaban amidst fears that a big gunfight may erupt anytime.

DCC sources said some of the gang members were present at the DCC office but did not interfere in the bidding process. The gangs usually frighten prospective bidders away from dropping their schedules in a bid to win the contract.

To avoid clash, all the zonal offices of the DCC and the Divisional Commissioner's office accepted bids. DCC sources said 16 schedules were dropped at Nagar Bhaban alone yesterday for a project of Tk 1.84 crore for developing infrastructure on the Dhaka University campus.

## Hasina's phone calls

From page 1

tion and details about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's phone call to Opposition leader Khaleda Zia on Sunday.

"It was a political stunt. The PM deliberately did this to bluff the people," Mannan said about the phone call.

He said the Prime Minister is not sincere to resolve problems through discussion. She talked about dialogue many times but did not send any letter or formal invitation.

The Prime Minister continued making indecent remarks about BNP leaders, intensifying repression, filing false cases and holding polls unilaterally on the one hand while talking about dialogue on the other hand, Bhuiyan alleged.

He said the Prime Minister's statements at the OCAB meeting again proved her insincerity for dialogue. "Moreover, her remarks at the meeting are objectionable."

He said the Prime Minister's office could contact the private secretary of the Leader of the Opposition if she (PM) was really sincere for talks. But she did not do so and made the call before 9am.

The PA and other staffs of the Opposition leader do not come to office before 10am now because of Ramadan. The PM's phone was received by a house maid, for whom it was not possible to guess that the PM was in the office.

When his attention was drawn to the fact the PM's call was made through a red phone, Bhuiyan said, "It was seldom used. Barring some exceptional situations in the last three years, there were few calls through the red phone, none of those from the prime minister."

There are two red phones at the residence of Khaleda Zia—one of those at her bed room,

which was out of order. It was not repaired as it was not used frequently. "A government mechanic repaired the bed room red phone this morning," Mannan said.

Mannan claimed that the PM made the call to Khaleda Zia before attending the OCAB function as she thought that the issue of a government-opposition dialogue could be asked there by newsmen.

"We hoped that the PM would withdraw her indecent remarks about Khaleda Zia and apologise for it. But she again made objectionable remarks at the OCAB meeting," he added.

Khaleda Zia, while she was prime minister, had phoned the then Leader of the Opposition. "Moreover, as a minister and then joint secretary general of BNP, I met Sheikh Hasina and handed over Khaleda Zia's letter inviting her for dialogue."

## Steps sought for stable paddy, rice prices

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Food at a meeting yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for stabilising market prices of paddy and rice, reports BSS.

The meeting, held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with the committee chairman Md. Saidul Huq in the chair, reviewed the overall food situation of the country and expressed satisfaction over adequate stock of foodgrains.

The meeting also directed the authorities concerned to identify the unused food godowns of BADCO to increase stock capacity and prepare a report and submit it to the committee immediately.

## Banking system

From page 1  
made the application of the law ineffective.

The report pointed out that solutions to these problems have to be found out taking the socio-economic reality into consideration and one should not expect that mere appointment of foreign consultants can give a right direction for solving the problem.

The committee, after reviewing the overall situation, said that the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) seem to have reached a near-crisis point and the weak supervision system of the central bank was mostly responsible for the crisis-ridden banking sector. Addressing this problem required the crucial and important decision for autonomy of the Bangladesh Bank, the BRC observed.

The report said that the unrealised loans comprised the most critical and grave issues for the banking sector. It also observed that the Money Loan Courts have failed to make any noteworthy contribution toward realising the classified loans. The committee recommended amendments to the law to make its applications easier and effective.

Identifying the various reasons for loan default, BRC has come to the conclusion that the major causes are 'corruption and lack of ethics' among bank officials. "Although corruption and forgery were proved against officials, the banks failed to take any exemplary punitive action including filing criminal cases against the offenders. It is not even clear which organisation of the government is vested with the responsibility of taking legal actions against banking sector forgeries and deceptions," the report said.

About the dilemma of too much and too little control of the central bank on the scheduled banks, the report said, it has now become necessary to impose or continue various restrictions on the banks for the sake of the depositors.

"The committee is aware that too many restrictions may hurt the private banks' independence to take business decisions and bureaucratic red-tapism may be created," the committee said.

## DCC

From page 1  
have to make several trips to dispose of a single load of garbage and return the container to its place. The department has been flooded with complaints from residents who want the containers removed from their neighbourhood.

The official said the system failed because the 136 organisations that collect garbage door-to-door don't use the containers properly. In many cases, the collectors simply dump the garbage on the road, creating an unbearable situation for drivers and residents.

The official said he didn't know whether the concrete bins would solve the problem, but insisted that "some project had to be taken up."

The container system was introduced in the early 1990s. More containers were imported to cover a wider area after Mayor Mohammad Hanif was elected.

Officials said the engineering section could say how much was spent on the project.

According to a rough DCC estimate, the city produces about 3,500 tonnes of garbage daily. The DCC can remove about 70 per cent of that with its 152 container trucks and 190 open trucks. However, roughly 40 per cent of the fleet are grounded due to mechanical problems.

## Cyber-crimes

From page 1  
phones for international or NWD calls.

"The hacking culture will in near future become part of the cultural heritage of today's kids along with Internet technology. The future looks bright for hackers in Bangladesh," said Nayem Ahmed of BISL.

Bangladesh is simply not ready to prevent them."

The Intellectual Property Rights Act has been approved by the cabinet but has been waiting for parliament's approval for months.

Computer professionals welcomed the act. However, they said it is not enough to prevent the high-tech crimes looming in the future.

Computer professionals said the country's data exchanges and automated banks could be targeted by Bangladesh's next generation of hackers.

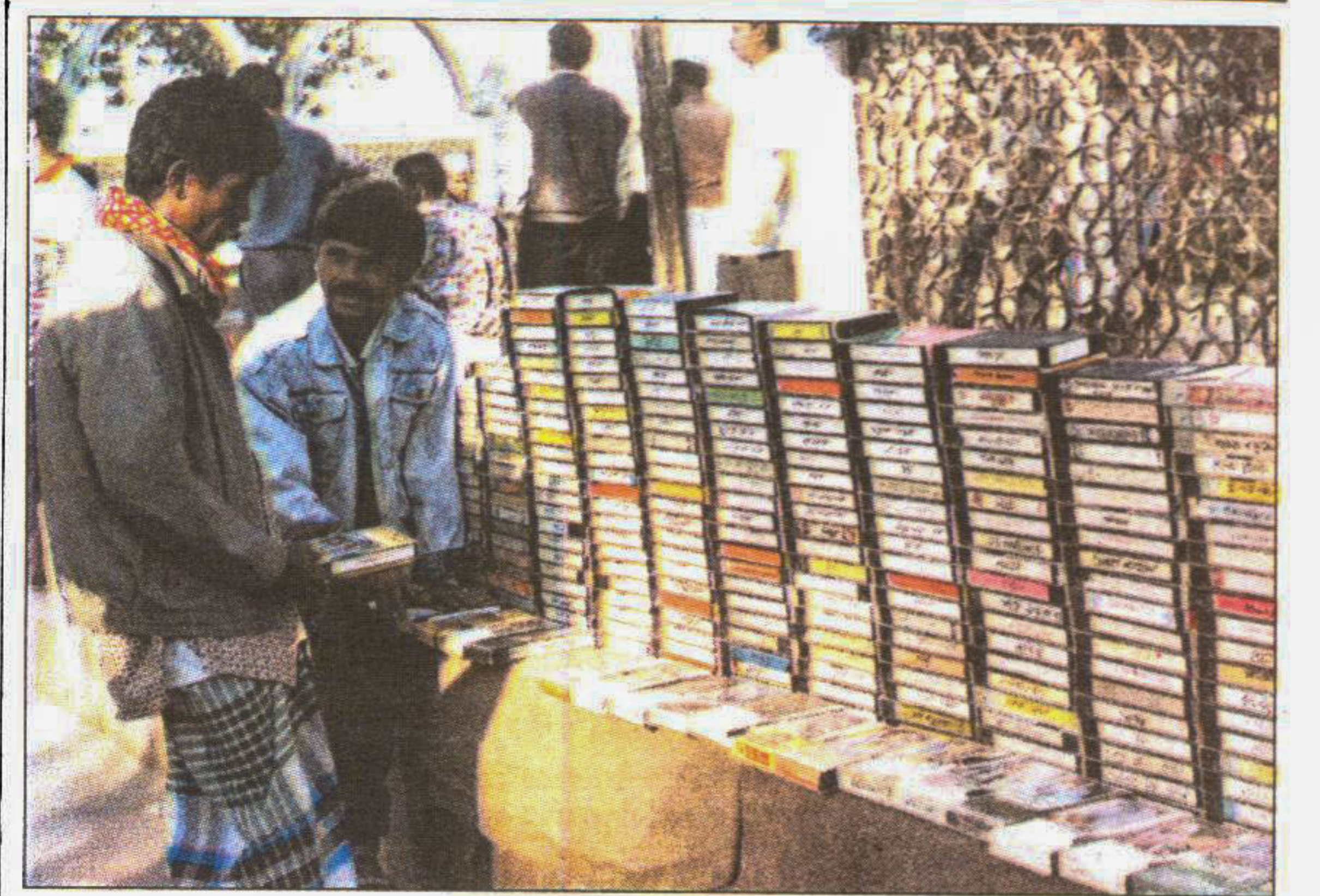
"The possibility of more intelligent hackers emerging is ripe since computer education is accelerating," said an IT professional.

Hacking has been around for more than a century. In the 1870s, several teenagers were banned from the USA's brand-new phone systems by enraged authorities.

Modern "hackers" can be traced back to 1961 university facilities with huge mainframe computers, like MIT's artificial intelligence lab.

Late 1990s, hackers broke into the federal defence Websites, including the US Department of Justice, US Air Force, CIA, NASA and others.

Report by the US General Accounting Office finds Defence Department computers sustained 250,000 attacks by hackers in 1995 alone.



## Antiques without an audience

A video dealer tries to unload outdated cassettes for Tk 10 to Tk 20 on footpath near Baitul Mukarram. Dealers used to fetch nearly double that for nightly rentals, but satellite television and VCDs have erased the market for their fuzzy films.

— Star photo by A.K.M. Mohsin

# Taming traffic the hard way

By Staff Correspondent

Members of the Armed Forces are apparently learning a different type of 'urban warfare', this time against an adversary called 'traffic jam'.

Taming the traffic that has gone haywire at the smoky, clogged and dusty face of the city where the lessons are hard to learn, as the drivers of auto-rickshaws, auto-tempos, buses and trucks have grown averse to discipline.

It took sometime, but the army personnel have taken positions in strategic points along the roads in Dhaka to ensure that no offender of the traffic rules can get away with whatever they do.

Men in uniform, stationed along the roads stretching from Jatrahari to Sayedabad, remain on their toes to control the terrible traffic with heavy hands. They cannot afford to show any mercy to any of the violators of traffic rules.

Meantime, all concerned including pedestrians, people on

board different modes of transport have praised the army personnel for taking the tough measures to discipline the violators. People feel that it was the violators of traffic rules for whom the commuters had to suffer a lot in this city of ungodly traffic jams.

Experiments of all sorts are going on in a bid to ease the unpredictable traffic jams. Some of them work well, while other backfire pitifully. For instance, no sooner the plying of rickshaws were banned in Gullistan area, the commercial district of Motiheel had to take the brunt of the tricycle rickshaws diverted towards it from Gullistan and the neighbourhood.

But all the efforts by army personnel have apparently failed to the bring about the desired results due to long practice of 'illegal road occupancy' by vendors, as a result of their 'shoddy deals' with some members of law enforcing agencies.

For the last two days, a limited

number of army men at Gullistan-Phulbaria area tried their best to clear the road space otherwise occupied by vendors, for smooth movement of the vehicular traffic.

But the good effort went in vain as the moment army personnel got busy controlling the traffic, the vendors reappeared, much the 'burden of Sissipus' fashion, and set up their makeshift shops on the pavements and streets all over again.

Vendors in Gullistan area say that they always pay policemen on patrol to secure 'undisturbed' scope of business on the roads especially during the current Eid market.

In other parts of the city, traffic policemen were seen extending a helping hand to the army personnel. Things, however, did not improve, as much of the narrow roads were further narrowed down by the illegal encroachers in the shape of wayside vendors and hawkers.

# Cancer patients are cheated

From page 1

name of giving radiation dose. Illiterate patients mostly coming from rural areas are asked to lie on a revolving bed, taken to a room and told that radiation is being given. But actually no radiation is given. A radiation machine costs no less than Tk 5 crore.

This correspondent observed this during recent visits to the NICRH and some private clinics in the city.

All arrangements can be made according to needs of the patients and can also negotiate a discount," one of the staff at the NICRH engaged in the business said while talking in front of the main gate of the hospital.

The man in NICRH uniform had at first introduced himself as a hospital employee but when he realised that he was talking to a newsman, he said he was an outsider.

We get commission for sending patients to clinics or private chambers of doctors," he said but refused to name the clinics.

On investigation, it was learnt that there were at least thirty such brokers who were

either outsiders or hospital staff, engaged in luring patients to private clinics.

The NICRH stopped 'chemotherapy' treatment about two years back as supply of drugs was stopped. The lone Cobalt-60 radiation machine is inoperative for about a month now, it was learnt.

Usually, cancer patients are referred to the NICRH for treatment. "We do not accept patients directly coming here for treatment. Only those referred from other hospitals are treated here," said a doctor.

A fifty-eight-year old woman from Sylhet told this correspondent at a private clinic that she was referred to the NICRH. But on arrival there she found that there was no facility for radiation dose.

Suffering from cancer in her esophagus (37 per cent), she was lured to a private clinic. So far, she went to at least five clinics in the city but received virtually no treatment. She has already spent over Tk one lakh.

"Chances of my survival depend on proper radiation doses," she said.

About 70 patients come to the NICRH everyday for treatment.

Three fourths of them suffer from cancer in lung, ovary, cervix, stomach, liver, lymphoma, thyroid, tonsil, urinary bladder, esophagus, skin, speech organ and tongue.

The NICRH authorities as well as the health ministry are well aware of the problem in the hospital. The issue was discussed at a high level meeting recently, but nothing has so far been done, sources said.

When contacted, NICRH Director Prof Fazle Elahi said, "It is beyond my control. I have verbally warned those engaged in the practice. We even formed a committee to identify those engaged in it."

He however said steps are being taken to repair the Tk 5 crore Cobalt machine at the earliest.

There is no data on the number of cancer patients in the country. The Cancer Society of Bangladesh has estimated it at about 80 lakh.

A chemotherapy patient requires multiple doses of drugs and therapy for six weeks to ten months, depending on the nature of the disease. About 50 such patients come to the hospital every day for radiation therapy.

# Talks to end hijack drama

From page 1

to take action. Reports from Tehran said India had also asked Iran for help.

In Moscow, Tatiana Samoilina, a spokeswoman for Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), said the agency was liaising with its counterparts in other countries to help resolve the crisis.

An Indian diplomat based in Islamabad was sent earlier, although he had no power to negotiate.

Both the Afghan militia and Pakistan have criticised India for not moving faster.

UN coordinator for Afghanistan, Erik de Mul helped secure the release of one sick passenger Sunday after hour-long talks with the hijackers.