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## Good governance tops NGOs' new year agenda

As the country has been passing through a confrontational political situation since independence, belying people's aspiration for proper administration, good governance will be a key issue for NGOs early next century, reports UNB.

The old issues for early next century, ADAB Chairperson Qazi Faruque Ahmed says, are poverty, population, health, literacy, human rights, environment, women empowerment and natural calamity.

Former chairperson of the ADAB, Khushi Kabir, however, sees participation of the poor and women in policymaking at grassroots level as the key factor in carrying through NGO movement for ultimate success.

"Only micro-credits and service-oriented programmes are not enough. Power should not be centralised only within certain people and quarters," she says.

For ensuring good governance through a secular approach with equality for women, a good political culture and among the political parties is a prerequisite, they think.

"Politics in Bangladesh is not guided by principles or ideology but by money, muscle and misuse of religion," says Qazi

Faruque.

Both Qazi Faruque Ahmed and Khushi Kabir opined that the war criminals should be put to trial in the first years of the new century. "We want to see a secular Bangladesh. For this trial of war criminals is a must. If the Europeans can do it after many years of Second World War, why not we in Bangladesh?" questioned Khushi Kabir.

With NGOs like BRAC, Grameen Bank and Proshika joining the IT sector, Faruque says in the next years, Bangladesh could be an active player in the information technology revolution, which is sweeping the whole world.

Mentioning 73 per cent turnout in the 1996 elections, he said it should rise to high eighties. Local government bodies should also be strong and empowered in the first decade of the coming century.

Qazi Faruque says at present there is a positive trend in women's empowerment in the country and this will become even stronger in the years to come.

"In the first couple of years of the new century, we hope, women will be elected directly to parliament from reserved seats."

He termed religion-based family laws discriminatory to women and against the Constitution. Based on uniform family code, secular family laws should be enacted at the earliest.

Country's literacy rate is now 56, rising from 26 per cent in the decade of 1970s. The NGOs hope that the literacy rate will rise over 90 per cent by 2010.

Sanitation coverage is around 46 per cent and this is expected to rise above 90 per cent by the end of first decade of the new century. Child immunization coverage is expected cent per cent from 75 per cent now.

Presently, there is massive tree planting movement in the country. In the next 10 years all the deforested reserve forest areas, roads, embankments, railway tracks should be fully covered with trees.

The NGOs, specially working in the environment sector, think air population in major cities, including the capital Dhaka, should be reduced by 80 per cent of its present magnitude.

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Alhaj Miah Md. Golam Kibria  
General Secretary.

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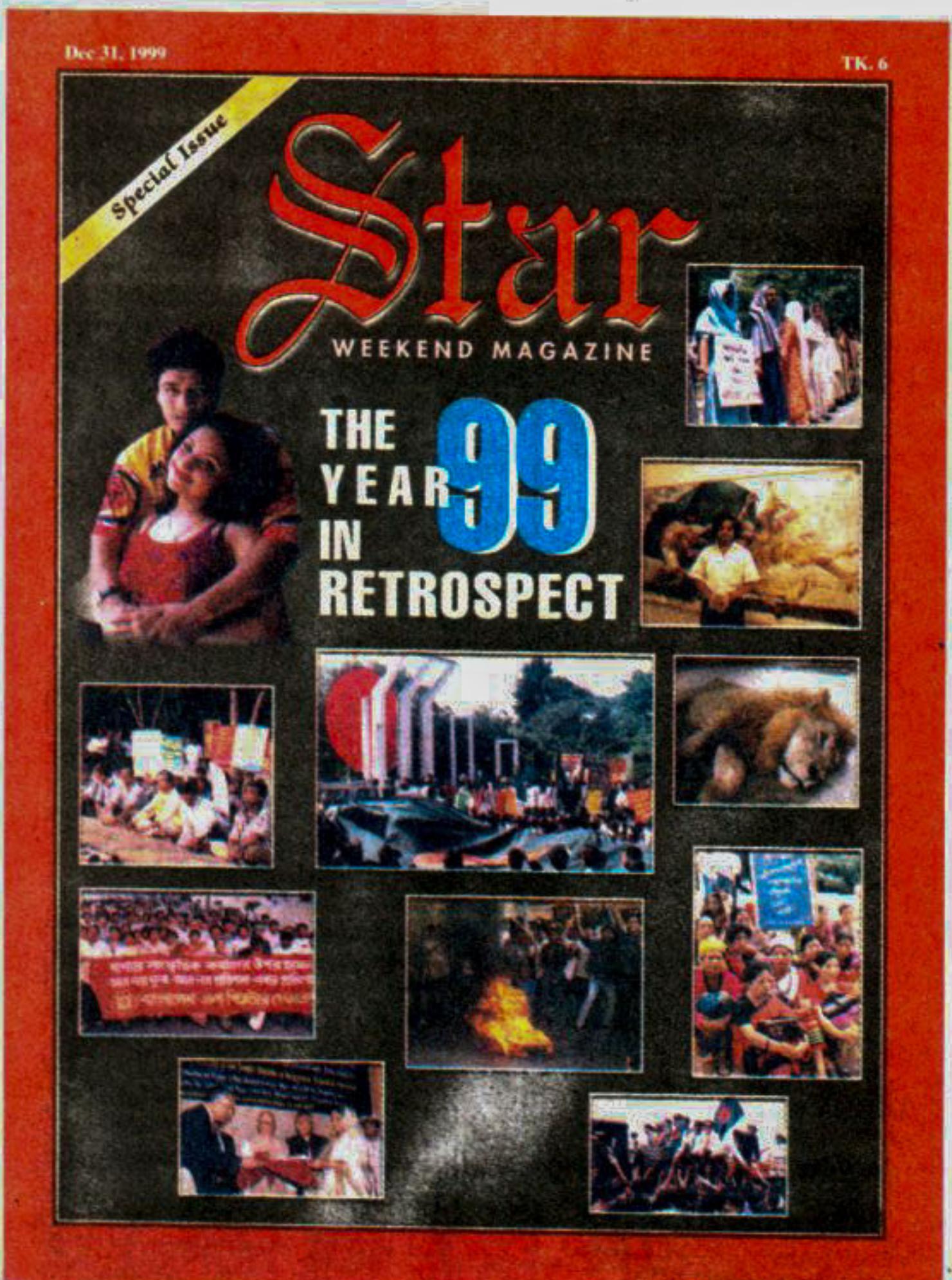
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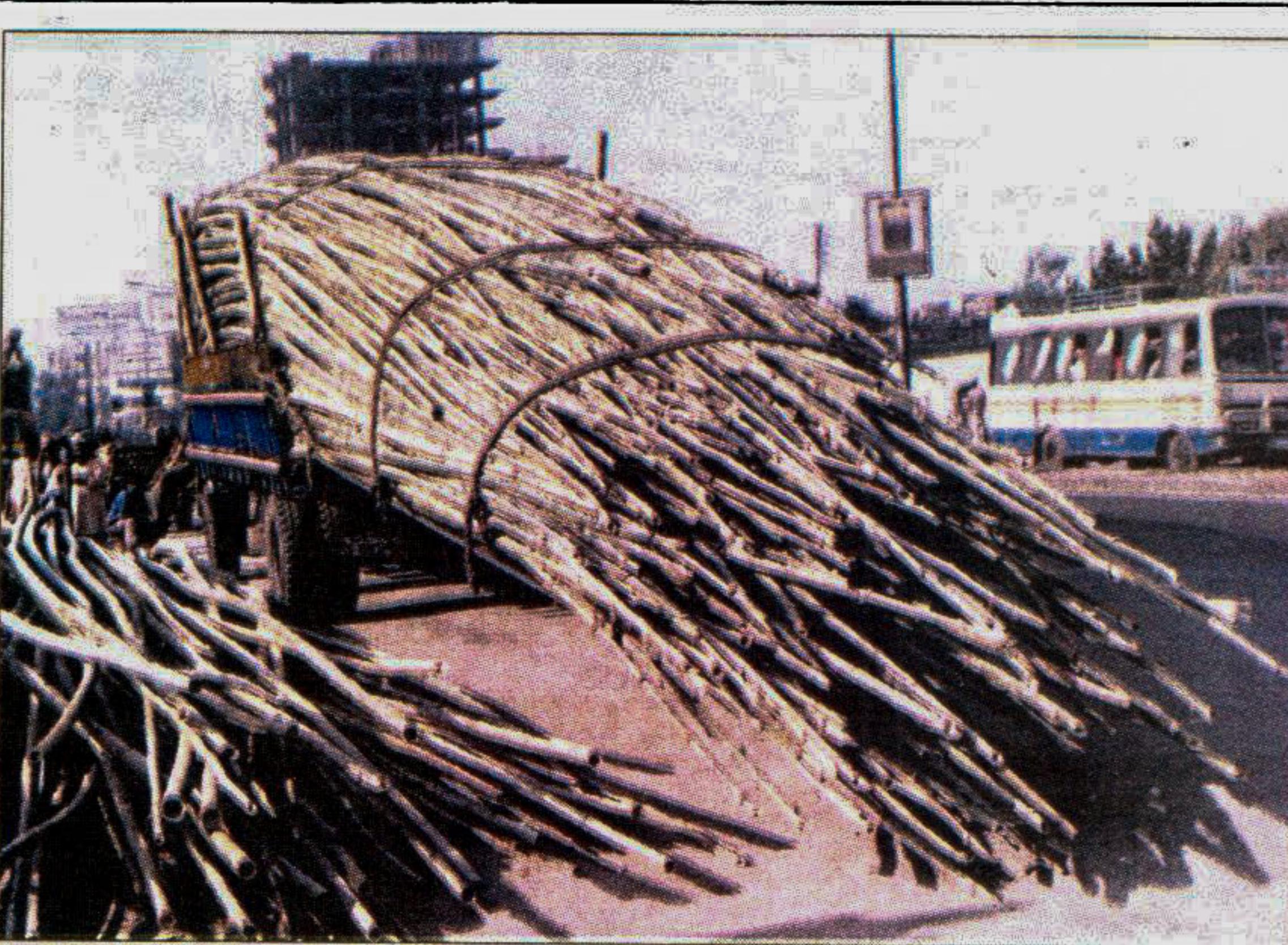
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Breaking the bar

Overloaded trucks are not supposed to ply Dhaka's streets until after 7 pm for safety reasons. But this load of bamboo seems to have evaded police.

— Star photo

## Card phone cadres

You could pay with your life  
at city booths

By Mustak Hossain

Threats and intimidation await visitors at over half of the city's card phones, compliments of gangsters and student activists who now control the booths.

In addition to the gangsters and cadres, the card phones are falling into a state of disrepair. Since 1992, 1,381 card phones, which are operated by TESIS, have been installed across the country by the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board.

Urmat, an Italian company, own the tender for the analogue phone sets, while Total Tel, Urmat's local agent, has been maintaining phones.

Shafik, the president of Mohsin Hall unit of the ruling party's Bangladesh Chhatra League, allegedly runs the booth.

There is nobody here to answer your question," said a young man selling cards outside the booth. "Please ask our leader Shafik Bhai."

Earlier, local goons stabbed Delwar, a TESIS employee on duty at an Azimpur booth, and stole Tk 28,000 from him.

A case was filed with the Lalbagh police, but four months have passed and no arrests have been made.

One caller was physically assaulted Tuesday night when he tried to use the phone without the cadres permission.

The victim said he complained to the sergeant on duty at the New Market crossing, but he didn't take any action.

A TESIS official said they've lodged a complaint with police about the cadres, insisting it's

their responsibility to maintain law and order at the booths.

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However, about 300 hand sets have been stolen or damaged in the last few years by impatient callers who attack the phones when they won't return their cards.

A vested quarter have been damaging card phone sets, lines and booths for a long time in order to increase their fax-phone businesses," said a source with the Telephone Shilpa Sangstha.

An spot-check revealed that ten of 15 card phones at the Azimpur booths were out-of-order.

Sources said a Total Tell manpower shortage and a jump in the price of spare parts are to blame for the lack of proper maintenance.

The Urmat sets started to malfunction because most only have a five-year life span, said TESIS sources.

Siddique  
vows to go  
ahead with  
Paltan plan

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique yesterday said he will go ahead with his planned 'protest meeting' at Paltan Maidan in the city today despite the authority's refusal to let him use the ground for the rally.

"We will hold our meeting today as per our earlier announcement. I hope good sense will prevail upon the government and they will behave," Siddique told The Daily Star last night.

The authorities denied permission to use the ground saying that it was already booked for a sports event, he said quoting from a letter sent to him by the National Sports Council (NSC).

"If the meeting is prevented at the venue, it will be held somewhere nearby," Siddique said.

He said he had sought permission on Monday. He claimed that the Paltan Maidan was not booked earlier for any programme today.

When contacted Minister of State for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs and Chairman of NSC Obaidul Kader said permission for the rally was sought late.

Siddique should have sought the permission at least one week ahead of the programme, he said.

Siddique called the meeting at Paltan to protest foiling of his Friday's convention at the Institution of Engineers where

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More textbook  
officers sued  
for corruption

In a crackdown against corrupt officials of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the Bureau of Anti Corruption yesterday filed two more criminal cases, reports UNB.

With the latest cases against seven officials, five cases were lodged for alleged corruption of about Tk 14 crore in the NCTB that determines secondary school curriculum and publishes textbooks.

Officials said the Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed two cases with Motijheel thana yesterday accusing seven incumbent and former officials of the NCTB for causing financial loss of more than Tk 14 crore.

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Crackers hurled at residence of Prof Zafar Iqbal

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 29: Three crackers were hurled at the residence of Prof Jafar Iqbal, Dean, Faculty of Computer Engineering of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology this morning, an official said.

Three unidentified young men came to the campus at about 6:30 am and hurled the crackers at the building in which Prof Jafar Iqbal lives. Some doors and windows of the building were damaged by the blasts. The youths, however, managed to escape.

President and General Secretary of the Shahjalal University Teachers' Association in a joint statement have condemned the incident. They also demanded exemplary punishment to the culprits responsible.

Under a separate plan of the government, 3 lakh digital telephones would be installed under build-own-operate (BOO) basis.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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## Indians divert Muhuri river

By Staff Correspondent

Indians have changed the direction of flow of the river Muhuri, by setting up spans in violation of the border guideline, causing serious erosion on the Bangladesh side, officials alleged.

Due to serious erosion of the river some 79 acres of land emerged as char (shoals) areas on the river Muhuri, of which India has already occupied a sizeable chunk.

At least 59 skirmishes took place between the two sides, in nine phases, as India continued its policy of encroachment of the newly emerged land during more than the last two decades. At least five people were killed during these clashes, locals said.

India is now in possession of about 24.5 acres of land near the disputed area, while Bangladesh possesses 2.5 acres.

But 52 acres of land were described as 'disputed' since 1974 and the right of possession over the land could not be settled even after 44 rounds of meeting between the two sides.

People of the area along the Bangladesh border complained that they are invariably forced to leave their homes when clashes between BDR and BSF break out along the borders.

The clashes mainly occur when the Indians encroach the borders and make attempts to cultivate land in the disputed area.

Aziz Mohammad Bhai was arrested earlier for his alleged involvement with passing 'secret information' in the name of ATV programmes.

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested Raja Mo-

hammad Bhai, brother of Aziz

Mohammad Bhai, from Moti-

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