

The Nation

Weather

Dry weather may continue

Prevailing dry weather is likely to continue over the country with partly cloudy sky over Chittagong region during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderate to thick fog may occur across the country in the morning while prevailing cold wave may continue over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and in the region of Srimongal and Sitakunda, Met Office predicted.

No appreciable change in night temperature is expected over the country during the period, but night temperature may fall in the subsequent two days, it forecast.

The country's highest temperature 26.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and the lowest 6.7 degrees at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.27 pm and rises on Saturday at 6.43 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage
	Max	Min	
Dhaka	17.4	12.0	77
Chittagong	26.2	13.7	69
Rajshahi	20.6	08.5	92
Khulna	23.8	09.5	88
Barisal	24.3	10.0	95
Sylhet	26.8	11.2	66
Cox's Bazar	26.4	14.3	86

HERE and THERE

OISCA int'l (Japan)

Lion Benajir Ahmed, a noted social worker, was elected chairman of OISCA International (Japan) Bangladesh National Chapter, at an election held yesterday at Gulshan Club in the city yesterday, says a press release.

OISCA International with its headquarters in Japan, a UN affiliated organisation having its branches all over the world is working for environment and development. Beside these OISCA Bangladesh is running two training centres at Narsipur, Savar from where every year 300 boys & girls are given 1 year practical training on agriculture, poultry, fisheries and other sectors by the Japanese instructors.

CLASS

Children Leukemia Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr yesterday distributed cash and gifts among children suffering from leukemia and undergoing treatment in Bangabandhu Medical University Hospital, reports UNB.

CLASS executive member Dr Rawnak Jahan, Capt Shaheen Iqbal, Mahbub Alam, M Azharul Islam and Dr Afzul Islam were present during distribution of the gifts at the Isolation Ward of the hospital.

CLASS formed to support the child leukemia patients and their families, set up an 'Isolation Ward' with 'Play Corner' in the Leukemia Unit of Chittagong Medical College Hospital and provided assistance to 50 children for their treatment.

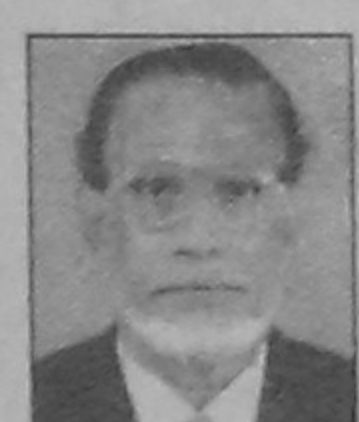


Obituary

Nadira Shahid, wife of Kazi Waliur Rashid, died on December 31, 1999 at a hospital in Kuwait. Her dead body will reach Dhaka today, says a press release.

She left behind a daughter, a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death.

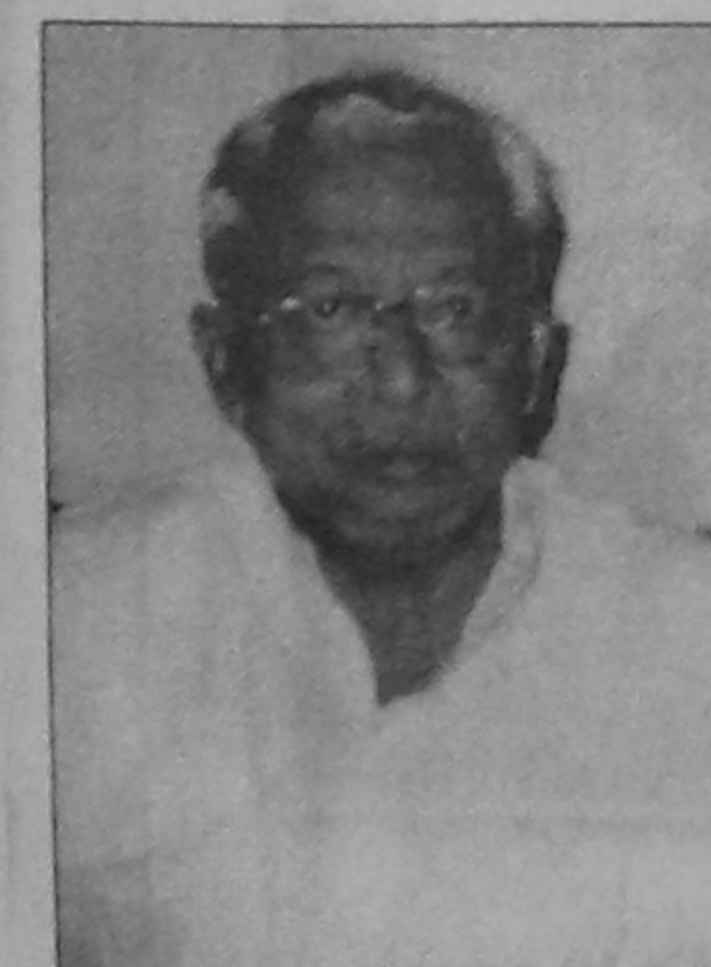
Her namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Dhanmondi Road No 7 mosque after Jumma prayers and she will be buried at the Azimpur graveyard today.



Mohammad Abdul Hye, a retired joint secretary and ex-member of the Public Service Commission (PSC), died at his Dhanmondi residence on January 5.

He left behind two daughters, one son and a grand-daughter and relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

His kulkhwant will be held on Monday, after Asr prayers at his residence at 268A/1 (new 47), Road No 27, Dhanmondi R/A.



Shailendra Kishore Chowdhury, a teacher of Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (BAFA) died at his residence on January 5. He was 66, says a press release.

Chehlum

By Staff Correspondent

The chehlum of Syed Mahbubul Haque (Benu Mia) will be held at his Magura residence on January 11.

A valiant freedom fighter and a leading businessman in Magura, Mahbubul Haque died of colon cancer in Dhaka on November 30. He was 72.

To mark the occasion a milad mahfil will be held after the Asr prayers on the day. Relatives and well-wishers have been requested to attend and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Moon sighting committee meets today

A meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee will be held at 5 pm today at the conference room of the Islamic Foundation, reports UNB.

The committee requested all concerned to provide information about sighting of the holy Shoual moon on the day from any parts of the country over telephone and fax numbers given below or by any other means.

Phone numbers: 9559493, 9559497, 9559511, 9550280, 9559643, 9556407 and 9558337, fax no. 9563397. These telephone numbers will be used only to receive information about moon sighting, not to provide the same.

The committee has urged all not to ring over these phones to know whether or not the moon is sighted as arrangements have only been made to inform the people as early as possible through radio and television, the release added.

Dacoity at newsman's house

By Staff Correspondent

Dacoits took away gold ornaments weighing about 35 ounce, cash and valuables from the Mirpur residence of the Chief Reporter of Bangla daily Prothom Alo last night.

Eight persons knocked the door of Arun Karmakar's residence at 1/15 Mirpur Section 6 about 7:45 pm and said they were from the NGO where his wife Jharna Mukherjee works.

As soon as Jharna opened the door, they stormed into the house, tied up her and a servant and decamped with the valuables and about Tk 7000, police said.



Death anniversary

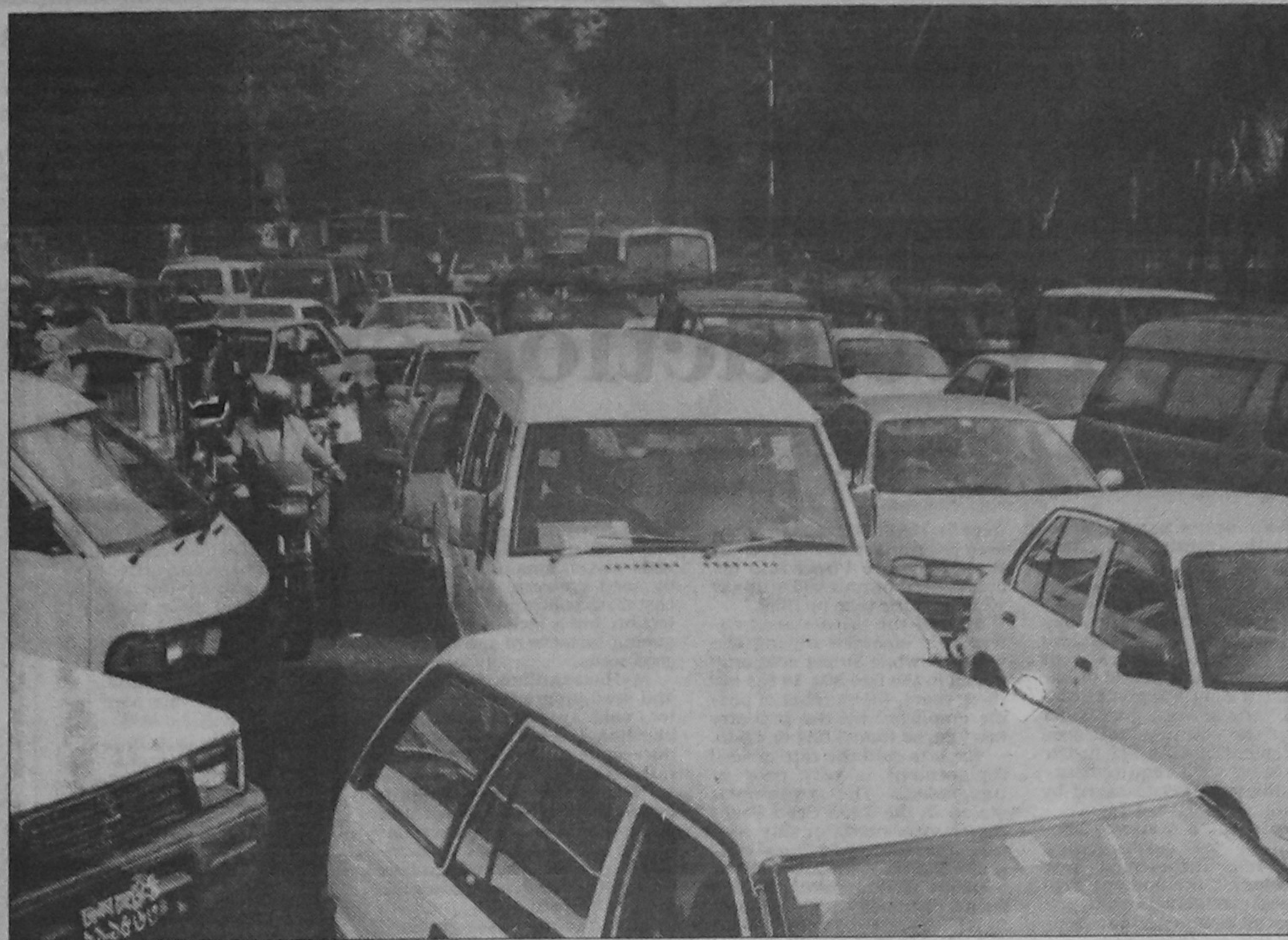
The 24th death anniversary of Mohammad Sirajuddin, founder of Modhumita Cinema Hall and Modhumita Group of Industries, will be observed tomorrow, says a press release.

Mohammad Sirajuddin died on January 8 in 1976.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwant for Mohiuddin Ahmed, the youngest political prisoner of Language Movement and president of the then East Pakistan Chhatra Union, will be held at his residence in the city at 3 pm today, reports UNB.

Rahman Akhter (Roni), wife of Mohiuddin Ahmed, has requested his relatives, friends, political colleagues and journalists to attend the milad at House No. 68 Kakrail and pray for salvation of the departed soul, according to a press release.



The city experienced severe traffic congestion yesterday, the last working day before the Eid holidays. This photograph was taken from Hare Road area.

Bangladesh Chapter of Press Foundation of Asia formed

The Bangladesh Chapter of the Press Foundation of Asia (PFA) has been formed with Mahbubul Alam, Editor of the Independent and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Editor of Bangladesh Observer as President and General Secretary respectively, reports UNB.

Other office bearers are: vice-presidents Moazzem Hossain, Editor of the Financial Express and Zakaria Khan, Editor of the Bangladesh Patrika, joint-secretaries Harun Habib, acting chief editor of BSS and Farid Hossain, bureau chief of AP in Dhaka and treasurer Chapal Bashir, special correspondent of the Independent.

A council of advisors has been formed with Barrister Mainul Hossain, Chairman of Board of Editors of the Daily Ittefaq and the New Nation, eminent columnist A B M Musa Toab Khan, Advisory Editor of the Janakantha, Bazlur Rahman, acting editor of the Daily Sangbad, A Z M Enayetullah Khan, Editor-in-Chief of Weekly Holiday, Rahat Khan, acting editor of the Ittefaq, Mahfuz Anam, Editor of The Daily Star, Kazi Shahed Ahmed, Editor of the Akker Kagoj, Golam Sarwar, Editor of the Daily Jugantar, Enayetullah Khan, Chief Editor of UNB, Motiur Rahman, Editor of the Daily Pratham Alo, A M M Bahaudin, Editor of the Daily Inquilab, Benazir Ahmed, acting editor of the Daily Bhoror Kagoj, Matlur Rahman Chowdhury, Editor of the Daily Manabjama, Syed Kamaluddin, Correspondent of Far Eastern Economic Review, Hassan Shahriar, President of Commonwealth Journalists Association, Bangladesh chapter and Adv Gazil Huq, Chairman of Press Institute of Bangladesh.

The Press Foundation of Asia is an international organisation of leading publishers and editors of Asia-Pacific countries with its headquarters in Manila. Founded in 1967, PFA has been working to promote journalism in this region by conducting training programmes, seminars and workshops. It operates the feature service known as Depthnews.

'Red Army'

From page 1

arrive by rickshaws, baby-taxis, rickshaw vans and cars with their luggage. Two or three kulis from their vantage point immediately cordon you and start escorting your vehicle right up to the terminal.

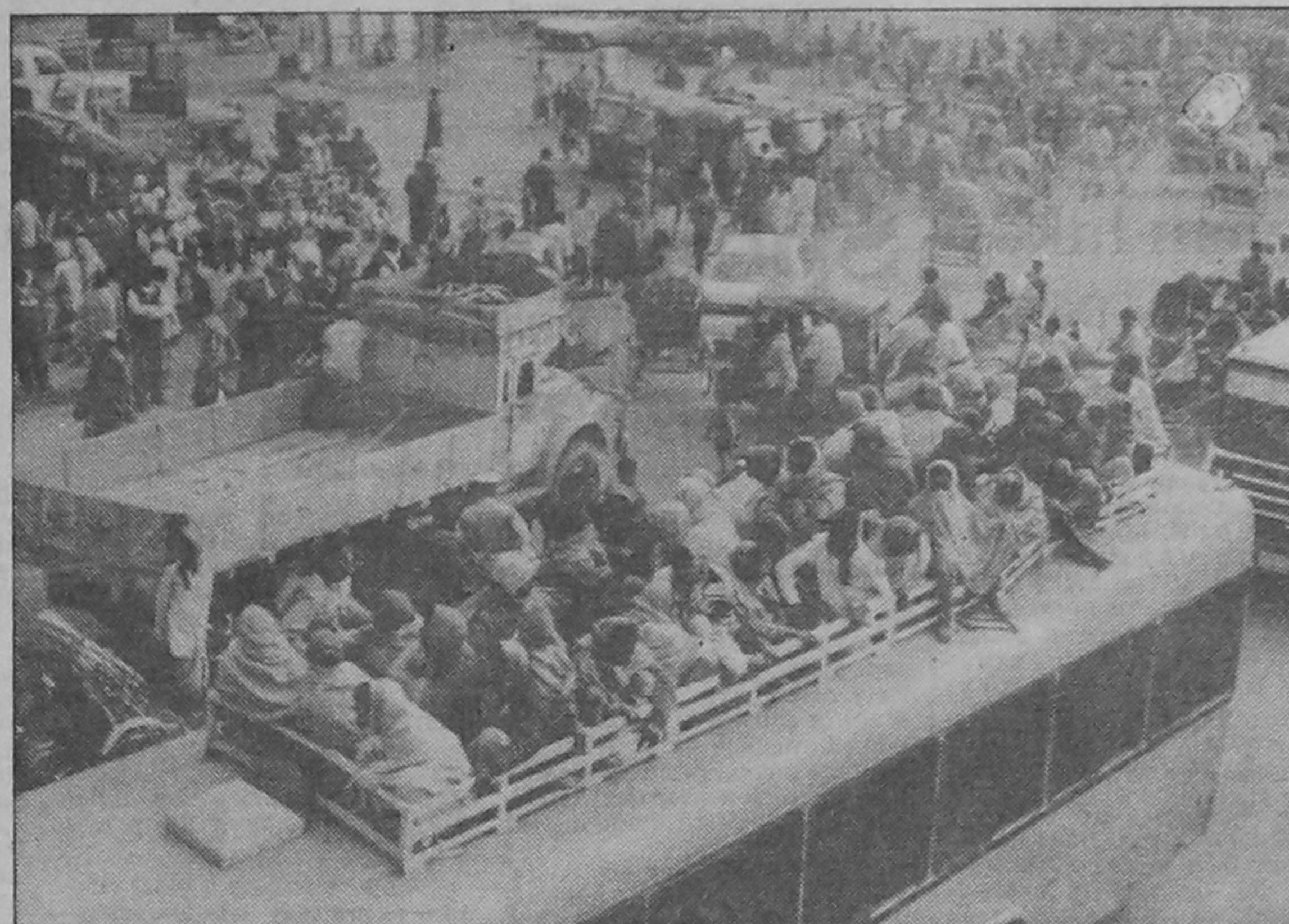
At the terminal, the kulis ask the passengers to get out of the vehicle and insist on carrying their luggage in to the awaiting motor launches as a matter of right, so to say.

They manage seats for you out of the thin air, as it were, inside vessels that apparently have no vacant seat. The floors or the decks of all the vessels have been already been occupied by rows of bed sheets spread on the passengers' seats. The desperate home-bound passengers are now forced to 'buy the seat', notwithstanding their tickets, which happen to be under the jurisdiction of the 'Red Army'.

The kulis again compel the passengers to buy a single space (seat) for anything between Tk 30 and Tk 300. The only alternative is to spend the entire travelling time on roof-tops of the launches.

Once the payable amount is settled, the kulis realise their duties for carrying the luggage and managing the coveted seats for you. The amount varies from Tk 50 to Tk 300 or more depending on the size of the crowd already on board, the size of your family and your bargaining capacity.

Men of the 'Red Army' do all these in connivance with the police, the men of the Bangladesh Water Transport Authority, Bangladesh Water Transport Corporation and the Officials and staff of the motor vessels, said one of the 'red-shirts'. The men in the red are partners in progress to all of them!



Finding no other alternatives, people are travelling on roof of bus to get home before Eid. — Star photo

Cabinet

From page 1

sensation in the council of ministers from the northern districts. Six new ministers were added to the three existing ones from the region.

Redistribution of portfolios was learnt to have caused some despair among influential ministers like Tofail Ahmed, Syeda Sajeda Choudhury, Zillur Rahman, Mohammad Nasim and Matia Choudhury.

Salahuddin Yusuf, who has been made a minister without portfolio, had been stripped of his health portfolio, reportedly feels like the 'worst victim of the latest changes'.

The changes also caused frustration for former Home Minister Major (Retd) Rafiqul Islam, who had been made minister without portfolio, ever since his portfolio was given to Nasim, some 10 months ago. He has long been expecting a 'ministerial responsibility'.

One rumour has it that minister Rafiq had submitted his resignation a few days ago. The minister was not available for comment until last night. An aide of the minister at his official residence said last night that the minister was 'there but not willing to talk to the press'.

Suranjit Sengupta, hitherto an adviser to the Prime Minister, has been given the rank, status and pecuniary benefits that a cabinet minister is entitled to, thus removing his long standing dissatisfaction. But if, however, did not happen until after the latest changes in the Cabinet.

On Tuesday, the government announced that Sengupta would enjoy all the benefits of a Cabinet minister. Three other advisers to the PM had been given the rank and status of cabinet ministers at the time of their appointment.

Biman hikes

From page 12

Biman pilots had been agitating following expiry of the MOU in June 1998 and stopped flying extra hours from December 1 last year, leading to disruption in Biman flight schedules.

In recruitment of pilots, preference would be given to those having commercial licence and extra flying hours in their logs, with experience in handling equipment. This will enable former Air Force men and other pilots to join the Biman, the sources said.

But all in Biman are not happy even after the decisions, the sources said. Moves are underway by certain quarters who are lobbying for a change in the management, particularly replacement of its Managing Director.

They are accusing the MD of curbing union activities in Biman, which is trying to find a partner to offload its 49 per cent shares by this year.

Assaulted woman

From page 1

tion of the case after it was filed yesterday. Hannan Khan, DC of DB told The Daily Star last night.

The DB will seek fresh remand for the accused and set those free, who would be found innocent, the DC said.

Asked about Mamun, Mokhtar and Taher, the DC said, "Mamun and Mokhtar have been accused by the victim". The victim could not identify Taher and Jewel, the DC said.

"Nobody came to save her," police said, quoting her statement registered with the DB. Except the police, everybody assaulted her, she is learnt to have told the police.

Asked whether Mamun, Mokhtar and their friend Taher rescued her first and then handed her over to police, she said, she had fainted during the process of assault and found herself inside a police van, from where she was picked up by friends.

AC Toufik of DB and his party rescued her from the spot with the help of Zillur, Laltu and some others, DB officials said last night quoting police findings.

She wondered why no religious political organisation protested against publication of photographs during the holy month of Ramadan, police said quoting the victim.

Other suspects, however, were yet to be arrested, police said adding their team had been sent to Bogra, which was still looking for Russel.

Fog

From page 1

yesterday to dense fog in the morning. Along with the fog, a cold wave continued to sweep the country. The lowest temperature of 6.7 degree Celsius was recorded at Srimongal, the Meteorological Department said.

The northern districts bore the brunt of the cold wave where temperatures fell below 10 C, making life difficult for the poor.

In the city, the minimum temperature was recorded at 12 C. Sun did not shine before mid day. When it broke through the dense fog, a veil of mist still clouded it, leaving city dwellers out on the street on the last working day before the Eid holidays.

The day's minimum temperatures were recorded at 7.2 C in Jessore, 7.6 C in Satkhira, 8 C in Chuadanga and Ishwardi, 8.5 C in Rajshahi, 9 C in Dinajpur, 9.3 C in Bogra, 9.4 C in Rangpur, 9.6 C in Syedpur, 9.5 C in Khulna, 10 C in Barisal, 10.8 C in Bholia, 10.8 C in Faridpur, 10.3 C in Tangail, 11 C in Mymensingh, 10.8 C in Comilla, 10.6 C in Feni and 11.2 C in Sylhet.

The Met office said in its forecast for today that dry weather would continue all over the country with a partly cloudy sky over Chittagong. There may be moderate to thick fog in the morning.

The cold wave may continue in Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and in Srimongal and Sitakunda regions. The night temperature may fall further in the next 48 hours beginning from 6 p.m. today, it said.

findings.

Mamun and Mokhtar, however, claimed to have rescued her earlier and handed her to the police. The victim, however, denied this.

Zillur and Laltu were his friends, with whom she came to the TSC on that night and were also present at the DB office when she was recording her statement before the police.

Sunny, brother-in-law of Zillur, was also with them on that night, she said.

On the night of December 31, she along with the family of Zillur and friends, went round streets of Dhaka city till about 10:00 pm.

Later, Zillur and his friend Laltu and brother-in-law Sunny took her for a ride in and around the city areas.

At one point they came to Doyel Chatter with a plan to go to the TSC. Soon after they reached the TSC, the gang started molesting her, she said, adding her companions could not save her even after repeated cries for help.

She wondered why no religious political organisation protested against publication of photographs during the holy month of Ramadan, police said quoting the victim.

Other suspects, however, were yet to be arrested, police said adding their team had been sent to Bogra, which was still looking for Russel.

Sena Kalyan Sangstha stipend

Sena Kalyan Sangstha has invited applications for school and madrasah level stipend for the year 2000 from children of relieved or retired armed forces personnel, an ISPR press release said, reports BSS.

Children studying in various classes in school and madrasahs who obtained 40 per cent and above marks are eligible for application but not more than two members of a family at a time will apply for the stipend at all level.

Prescribed application forms could be collected from all District Armed Services Boards and Sena Kalyan Sangstha's Head Office at Sena Kalyan Bhaban, 195, Motijheel C/A by showing pension or discharge certificates. The last date for submission of duly filled application at District Armed Services Board is March 20.

The Met office said in its forecast for today that dry weather would continue all over the country with a partly cloudy sky over Chittagong. There may be moderate to thick fog in the morning.

The cold wave may continue in Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and in Srimongal and Sitakunda regions. The night temperature may fall further in the next 48 hours beginning from 6 p.m. today, it said.

Better breeds

From page 1

tests, while the private sector producers should also begin selling Sourav and Gourab seeds shortly.

Farmers produced a record two million metric tons of wheat last year in Bangladesh. However, experts anticipate a drop in production this year, since farmers planted their fields later than normal.

10,000 opposition activists arrested in '99: Odhikar

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition political activists passed difficult days last year as the government showed a high level of intolerance towards political opponents and extensively used the controversial Special Powers Act against them.

As a result of so many arrests, the human rights situation in over crowded jails deteriorated severely.

These were revealed in the annual report released by a Dhaka based human rights coalition called Odhikar. According to the report, some 10 thousand opposition activists were arrested in 1999. "Of them, some two thousand were arrested under the SPA, 1974."

Besides, some 70 opposition rallies came under attack either from police or by the ruling party activists last year, the report says.

Arrest of so many people severely affected the living conditions in prisons. According to a government estimate, country's 80 jails — nine central jails, 55 district jails and 16 thana level prisons — have a capacity to house 23,942 inmates. "But on an average, some 62 thousand people were there in 80 jails in 1999," the Odhikar report says, drawing a conclusion that human rights of inmates was the prime casualty.

Of the inmates, the number of convicts was 14,167 while the number of under trial prisoners was some 46 thousand. The number of detained persons was more than one thousand, while

16 of them were female. The jails contained inmates more than double their capacity, but annual budget for the prisons, formulated on the basis of usual capacity, was not increased.

In 1998-99 financial year, the budget for the prisons was Tk 90 crore that included salaries and allowances of seven thousand officers and employees of the jails on the one hand and food clothes and medicines for the inmates on the other.

The Odhikar report observe that the budget allocated for the prisons were not even adequate to provide the inmates with standard food, let alone other things.

Also the inmates are still deprived of their right to franchise. Odhikar found the phenomenon a major violation of fundamental rights of citizens on part of the state.

In 1999, a total of 49 people were tortured to death by various law enforcing agencies, the Odhikar report says, adding that police continued to adopt various illegal means including electric shock, uprooting nails, hitting at various joints of one's body and so on during interrogations.

The incidents of repression against women was on rise.

A total of 835 women were raped in 1999. Of them, 10 were raped by policemen. Sixty seven women died as dowry victims, while some 153 women sustained acid burns.

UK envoy laments

From page 1

is not a secret. The unhappiness has been expressed in the donor meet held in Dhaka last September and will also come up at the Paris meeting in April next," Walker said.

The envoy said the matter of corruption at all levels of the society has attained alarming proportions. In tackling corruption, the government has to give the lead.

"Corruption," he said, "is so widespread that bribes are often required to do business or to obtain even basic services such as health care in Bangladesh."

"Purchasing policies and tendering processes have to be above board. There has to be complete transparency," he said.

Walker commented: "Development Partners would no longer accept corruption anywhere in the world. The matter of corruption will definitely figure high in the agenda in the next April's Donor meet."

Leaving through the "Country Strategy Paper" for Bangladesh prepared by the Department for International Development (DFID) of his country, the British diplomat pointed out that several areas of governance and institutional issues were of concern to Great Britain, which incidentally treats Bangladesh as its second largest development partner.

The key issues identified in the public DFID document are the dominance of a small elite in politics, business and government; a fragile democracy, with a fractious political process driven more by personal and inter-party rivalry than by issues' despite widening political participation; the lack of effective representation of the interests of the poor; politically sponsored violence, especially at local level; insufficient information, or transparency to enable the actions of ministers and civil servants to be scrutinised effectively.

Other factors are: Limited accountability of those in authority, widespread corruption and poorly performing institutions.

Walker, also pointed to the UNDP Human Development Report and the Mahbubul Haq Human Index Report and said: "Like other countries in the Subcontinent, Bangladesh has a long way to go. But as a well-wisher of Bangladesh, I would say, it has to do more and do fast."

"In my view, you have a resilient people. What is required is total national commitment and a complete dedication from everybody. Your problems are solvable and quick development is possible."

"If corruption and terrorism gets out of hand, then it is very difficult to move forward and develop," Walker cautioned.

When asked to comment regarding the reaction given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on his recently reported remarks, David Walker replied: "What I said was not interference," was simply making some observations. And the same points have been made, time and again, by other donors and agencies including the World Bank and in various reports and country strategy papers."

On the law and order situation, Walker said: Anyone reading the newspapers knows the position.

He said, he had discussions with the Home Ministry and the police, and may be in future, something could be worked out for purposes of training of the police.

"However, the most important thing that is necessary is a change in the attitude (of the law enforcers)," he said.

David Walker said since the concept of caretaker government was now an accepted idea, it could perhaps be developed further.

He also pointed out that everyone agreed that devolution of the powers of government was good and more devolution of power to local government should take place. People would have more control over their own lives and decisions and there would be greater transparency through the process of devolution.

Speaking about bilateral relations David Walker, who is leaving Bangladesh after the end of his diplomatic stint said, "Our relations are generally very good. We have extended co-operative efforts in many fields. They include health programmes, education, agriculture, bridge-building, micro-credit, and women's empowerment programmes. There has been work in the domain of what we call institutional strengthening. We work both with the government and the NGOs. Our overall aim is to help in the elimination of poverty in Bangladesh."

He said bilateral trade has decreased slightly as the economy has also faced a setback. He expressed optimism that trade would pick up soon and that the recent British Trade Fair, the third, has been a great success.

The High Commissioner was happy that the British Council in Dhaka and Chittagong and a small presence in Rajshahi were able to contribute in matters of education and human skills development. He was happy to note that the British Council was able to expand its services, for example, a cyber centre and played a key role in Dhaka and Chittagong life."

English language was making a comeback. English, he said, suffered a setback when it was removed from official use, and the present government recognises it. The number of students going to Britain every year would be over 700, he said.

David Walker who has spent 36 years as a career diplomat and has served in seven countries in four continents as career diplomat observed, "Democracy is the best and there is no alternative to democracy."

Drawing an analogy, he said, the engine of the car may be considered the parliament, the steering wheel the government and its fuel — election. The car may move a short distance with fuel, i.e. after elections, but it needs oil as a lubricant.

"Lubricating oil, the car will overheat, seize up and stop. The lubricant of democracy is tolerance and I believe there is need for tolerance to make democracy in Bangladesh more workable."

Bangladesh, he said, is a country with great potential. Bangladeshis are very welcoming and friendly. And that is not something that you will find everywhere.

"My wife and I are very committed to Bangladesh and we will keep in touch with our friends in London," David Walker said.

Walker said, "I will be leaving Bangladesh after the end of his diplomatic stint said, "Our relations are generally very good. We have extended co-operative efforts in many fields. They include health programmes, education, agriculture, bridge-building, micro-credit, and women's empowerment programmes. There has been work in the domain of what we call institutional strengthening. We work both with the government and the NGOs. Our overall aim is to help in the elimination of poverty in Bangladesh."

He said bilateral trade has decreased slightly as the economy has also faced a setback. He expressed optimism that trade would pick up soon and that the recent British Trade Fair, the third, has been a great success.

The High Commissioner was happy that the British Council in Dhaka and Chittagong and a small presence in Rajshahi were able to contribute in matters of education and human skills development. He was happy to note that the British Council was able to expand its services, for example, a cyber centre and played a key role in Dhaka and Chittagong life."

English language was making a comeback. English, he said, suffered a setback when it was removed from official use, and the present government recognises it. The number of students going to Britain every year would be over 700, he said.

David Walker who has spent 36 years as a career diplomat and has served in seven countries in four continents as career diplomat observed, "Democracy is