

What's on today...

National roundtable: A national roundtable will be held on 'Bangladesh's Participation in International Economy: Barriers and Strategic Actions.' Organisers: Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA), The Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of DU and the Embassy of the United States of America. Venue: CIRDAP auditorium. Time: 10:15 am.

Foundation laying ceremony: The foundation laying ceremony of an 8-storey building and inauguration of a newly constructed auditorium of the press institute of Bangladesh (PIB) will be held. Chief guest: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Venue: PIB, 3 Circuit House Road. Time: 3:00 pm.

Inauguration: Sammilta Sanskritik Jote's programmes to celebrate Ekushey February will be inaugurated. Venue: Central Shaheed Minar. Time: 4:00 pm.

Seminar: The 4th seminar of the Liberation War and Bangladesh Research Institute will be held. Venue: Room No 101 of House No 113, Rd No 9/A. Time: 4:00 pm.

..... and tomorrow

BCPS lectures: Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons will hold two lectures on 'Surgery for SAARC countries' and 'Rheumatological Emergencies'. Venue: BCPS auditorium, Mohakhali. Time: 11:00 am and 12:10 pm.

Discussion meeting: Court Reporters Association will hold a discussion meeting on 'Human Rights and Court Reporting'. Venue: Dhaka Bar Association auditorium. Time: 3:30 pm.

Weather

Temperature may fall

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers may occur at a few places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions in the next 12 hours till 6pm today, reports UNB.

Thick fog may cover the river basins and moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country during the night and in the morning, the Met Office said.

Night temperature may fall by 1 to 2 degree Celsius over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 27.8 degree Celsius was recorded at Patuakhali and the lowest 14.0 degree Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:49 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:36 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
Dhaka	25.0	17.0
Chittagong	25.5	18.4
Rajshahi	22.2	16.0
Khulna	27.0	15.0
Barisal	27.0	18.4
Sylhet	26.0	14.0
Cox's Bazar	26.0	19.0

Natural disasters killed over 50 thousand people in '98 alone

ProVenton Consortium, an international partnership, was launched in Washington Sunday to reduce human and economic costs of natural disasters in the developing world, said a World Bank press release yesterday, reports UNB.

The consortium will equip developing countries with means to better cope with natural disasters — earthquake, hurricane and floods — and reduce the loss of life and destruction they cause.

It said natural disasters killed more than 50 thousand people and destroyed property and infrastructure worth US\$ 65 billion in 1998 alone.

Some 95 percent of disaster related deaths occurred in developing countries, where the poorest of the poor are the worst affected. The World Bank has lent more than \$ 19 billion for post-disaster reconstruction over the last 20 years, often more than once to the same country after successive disasters.

World Bank, an international coalition of governments, international organisations, private insurance companies, universities and non-governmental organisations launched the ProVenton Consortium.

The objectives of the consortium are to:

1) promote safety by raising the awareness of disaster related risks among governments and communities so that they can devise effective preventive measures;

2) support public policies that reduce the risk of natural and technological disasters in developing countries by, for example, the integration of prevention and mitigation mechanisms in development plans, adoption of improved building codes, and more effective management of both land use and emergency response agencies; and

3) develop government's ability to anticipate and respond effectively to disasters when they strike through the use of early warning systems and civil defence.

Three principles that will guide the consortium are:

1) Poverty and vulnerability are linked. As poor people are especially vulnerable to disasters, the consortium will assess the link between poverty and disasters as a first step to developing ways to increase protection.

2) Environmental protection is key. The consortium will

work to protect natural resources such as forests, coastal mangroves and coral reefs that can protect human settlements from the impact of cyclones and other weather related disasters.

3) Risks can be shared. Because risk insurance is not available to most people in the developing world, the consortium will explore ways of providing low-income groups with insurance cover, safety nets and other mechanisms that reduce individual risk by spreading it wider.

World Bank's partners in the Consortium include Pan-American Health Organisation, UNDP, Red Cross and Red Crescent, UN Humanitarian Affairs Office, World Meteorological Organisation, UN Environment Programme, World Conservation Union, Inter-American, Asian and African Development Banks, US Federal Emergency Management Agency, Organisation of American States, Land Planning Agency of Japan, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Norway, Saint Lucia, Mexico, Turkey, Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Federal Institute of Technology.

Vajpayee says No immediate plan to bring ashes of Netaji from Japan

NEW DELHI, Feb 7: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has said the government has no immediate proposal to bring the ashes of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose from Japan to India and that there was no move to politicise the issue, reports PTI.

Vajpayee made the clarification in a letter to forward bloc General Secretary Debabrata Biswas who had written to him taking strong exception to his statement last month that the government could initiate the process to bring Netaji's ashes provided there was a consensus on the issue.

In his letter, Biswas had said Vajpayee's statement amounted to scuttling the independent functioning of the inquiry commission appointed by his government to probe the disappearance of Netaji and one of its terms of reference was whether the ashes lying in a Japanese temple were those of Netaji.

While paying homage to Netaji on his 103rd birth anniversary last month, Vajpayee had said the government could initiate steps to bring home his ashes and keep them in the Red Fort.

He hadn't had anything else but beating heart to eat

SARAJEVO, Feb 7: A homeless alcoholic slit the throat of a dog and ate its still beating heart on a main street in the central Bosnian city of Zenica, a Sarajevo daily said Monday quoting witnesses, reports AFP.

Other homeless people in Zenica told the Dnevni Avaz paper they believed that the 45-year-old man, known as a disturbed person, "had not had anything else to eat" when he took to the drastic measure Friday evening.

Nepal's new DPM sown in

KATHMANDU, Feb 7: Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Paudyal took the oath of office at a ceremony held at the Royal Palace, state radio said today, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai administered the oath in the presence of King Birendra, it said.

Paudyal, 54, was named to the post last week and given the information and communications portfolios but oath-taking had been delayed as Bhattarai had been indisposed.

Japanese

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started negotiations with the government on the second phase of the 450 MW Meghnath Power Plant.

Besides, another Japanese company is holding preliminary talks with the Power Development Board for setting up a power plant in Kushiha.

Sylhet

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disputes could be resolved in Parliament," said the BNP lawmaker.

The situation in Sylhet became volatile when BNP and its allies started stormy agitations opposing the decision of the Shajahan University authorities to name its halls and buildings after Bangabandhu, Jahanara Imam and some other dignitaries.

The VC of the university, country's leading IT personality Prof Zafar Iqbal and some other teachers have already received life threats from the "fundamentalist" protesters.

At least one person was killed and many others were injured in the troubles and clashes over the issue in last several months. Locals apprehended more violence during the staggering 5-day shutdown.

Academic activity of the university has been stalled since December 3, last year.

The rally was also addressed by Jatiya Party MP M A Mukit Khan, Sunamganj district BNP president Fazlul Haque Aslam MP, Jamaat leader Barrister Abdur Rajjak, Principal Maswood Khan, Khelafat Majlis leader Moulana Obaidul Haque, Moulvibazar district BNP president Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury, Sylhet district BNP president MA Haque, and City Jamaat Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman.

Obituary

Mohammad Abdul Hye, a former CIS (Central Information Service) and a journalist died last Thursday in Los Angeles, USA, according to a delayed message received here from family. He was 64, reports BSS.

The body of the deceased, who was the brother-in-law of communist party leader Mohammad Farhad, will be brought in the city today, sources said.

Hye who went to USA in 1988 to settle there permanently. Before that he served in the CIS, Radio news and the weekly Holiday. He resigned from the government service in the eighties after working in DFP and EP wings of the Information Ministry.

The body of the deceased will be taken to Seraganj for burial at his village home after namaz-e-janaza at Bijoynagar Masjid after Zohr prayers. Friends and relations have been requested to contact his relation's house at 2 Bijoynagar, Dhaka and attend the janaza.

'Bangladesh major example of democracy in S Asia'

Bangladesh is a major example of democracy in South Asia and it is a beacon of hope for other countries in the Muslim world, said Karl F Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, reports UNB.

"That is good news, to be sure, but the even better news is that India is not the only democracy in South Asia. Bangladesh is another major example, even as it goes through growing pains in this respect," he said in a lecture at Howard University in Washington on February 2.

Speaking on state of democracy and economy in South Asian countries, Inderfurth said: "As such it (Bangladesh) is a beacon of hope for other countries in the Muslim world."

He said there is Bangladesh, a land of well over one hundred million, that is justly famed throughout the world for pioneering models of how people, especially women can pull themselves out of poverty through micro credits for small enterprise. He, in this context, mentioned the name of the

Grameen Bank. Referring to the US interest in South Asia and Bill Clinton's visit to India and Bangladesh next month, Inderfurth said South Asia has been on the backside of the US diplomatic globe.... Our growing interests and engagement reflect new realities in the region.

He said the US has an expanding agenda in South Asia, which contains four key items — democracy, economic reform, social development and integration into the global mainstream.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are working harder to curb abusive child labour through ILO. All three countries are also working hard to reduce heroin trafficking by working with the UN Drug Control Programme, he said.

Inderfurth also said that the full potential of US growing engagement with South Asia can be realised if the region addressed proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and regional and social conflict.

'Iranian missile attack on rebel base inside Iraq foiled: Mujahedeen'

BAGHDAD, Feb 7: Iran's main armed opposition said today it foiled a missile attack on one of its camps inside Iraq, as Tehran threatened retaliation for a series of explosions in the Iranian capital, reports AFP.

The People's Mujahedeen said its fighters on Sunday found six 107-mm missiles equipped with electronic timers just minutes before they were primed to fire at its Anzali camp, 40 km from the Iranian border.

"Thanks to the speed and vigilance of the Mujahedeen patrol guards, the missiles and a booby trap were disabled before they could act," the Iraq-based group said in a statement.

It said the camp, near the Iraqi town of Jalawla, had been the target of Iranian air raids in September 1997 and May 1993.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards chief, General Rahim Safavi, meanwhile, threatened reprisals in the wake of the

blasts on Saturday in Tehran that killed one person, Iranian state radio reported.

"If Iraq does not prevent the infiltration of the counter-revolutionaries on to Iranian soil and its armed forces will riposte strongly," Safavi warned, pinning responsibility for the rebels' activities firmly on Baghdad.

He noted that the Revolutionary Guards had "the task and duty of defending Iran's frontiers and ensuring security in the border zones."

Safavi expressed the hope however that the Iranian government would prevent further attacks by political means.

The Mujahedeen-claimed attack, apparently with mortars, damaged the offices of the Expediency Council, a powerful official arbitration body headed by former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Russia to propose structure of Chechen govt by Thursday

MOSCOW, Feb 7: Russia's Justice Minister Yuri Chaika said today his ministry had until Thursday to draw up proposals for creating a new government to rule Chechnya, reports AFP.

"We have been ordered along with the nationalities ministry to work on proposals to create organs of power and present the appropriate document to the government by February 10," Chaika told journalists in Moscow.

"Today we have all the legal and legislative bases for starting to create the power structures" in Chechnya, he said.

Chaika said a temporary administration headed by a representative of the Russian government in Chechnya would be installed first while Moscow waits for formal local legislation to be adopted.

"After creating a (temporary) legislative base, elections must be organised for forming the legislative branch and an executive branch will be put in place," Chaika said.

On Sunday, Russian forces raised their flag over the Chechen capital, Grozny, and acting President Vladimir Putin announced that the oper-

ation to liberate the capital had been completed.

Chechen leader vows to take Grozny

Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov vowed to retake Grozny from Russian forces, in an interview published Monday in the Barcelona daily La Vanguardia.

"For the time being, we have given up the city. We will take it back at a later date," Maskhadov said, adding that guerrilla warfare was the next step.

He played down reports of heavy casualties among the separatist rebels, saying that Chechen forces "had pulled out in orderly fashion along the route which had been prepared."

"The main force of 2,000 men withdrew without losses. Another group of 300 or 400 men... hit a mine field and had some losses. But most of our forces got out without difficulty and are in a safe place today," Maskhadov said.

"We have shifted to guerrilla warfare. We will hold our positions in the Argun river valley," he added.

Haider eyes govt next time, likens self to Blair

KLagenfurt, Austria, Feb 7: Far-right leader Joerg Haider, defying international outcry at his party's entry into government, predicted today he could be elected chancellor in Austria's next elections, reports AFP.

The Freedom Party leader, while insisting he will remain his native Carinthia, again compared himself to British Prime Minister Tony Blair as a political reformer.

"I have no ambition to become prime minister or chancellor of Austria in the next years," he told a press conference following the swearing-in of the Freedom Party in a coalition government with conservatives on Friday.

But pressed on what will happen at the next elections, in theory in four years' time, he said: "What's coming afterwards I cannot say."

"Perhaps the next election gives us the chance to be the strongest party, and under this condition I'm sure the president has to give me the mandate to form a government."

"I will be well prepared to lead a government of reform under

the Freedom Party and we will take ideas from the program of Tony Blair for instance," he said.

Haider has pledged to remain in Carinthia, where he was elected provincial governor last year, for his five-year mandate. But the new Austrian government includes six Freedom Party ministers, including vice-chancellor.

US team

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tional Stadium, the National Parade Square and the International Trade Fair site.

The team will also visit the Bangabavhan where the US President is likely to be the guest of honour at a luncheon or a banquet.

There are two stately suites at Jamuna. A number of dignitaries including Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his predecessor Deve Gowda stayed at Jamuna during their visits.

IGP: Contempt

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14.54 acres of land was occupied and enjoyed by the SP of Kush-tia.

Following a prayer of the original owners of the land, the government decided to return back the land to the original owners. The government published a gazette notification on May 7, 1987 in this regard. The Deputy Commissioner of Kush-tia issued a letter to the SP to hand over the land to the original owners but the SP did not comply with the order.

Thereafter, the SP also violated the High Court order of November 29, 1998 upon a writ petition filed by Mosharrakul Haque, one of the original owners.

'Water' put on ice for two weeks

NEW DELHI, Feb 7: The northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh slapped a two-week ban today on shooting of a film by acclaimed Canadian director Deepa Mehta, following violent protests by Hindu fundamentalists, reports AFP.

The Press Trust of India quoted district magistrate in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi, Alok Kumar, as saying the banning order would only be lifted if the threat of further violence receded.

HERE and THERE

SCF, Ctg unit

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 7: Speakers at an education conference said that not only primary education, but higher education, also has to be made compulsory and free.

The two-day long Education Conference on "Education policy and education crisis" begun at the Muslim Institute auditorium in Chittagong today.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF), Chittagong unit, has organised the conference.

The conference is divided into four sessions. At the first session on the opening day, the discussion was held on "One faced education and existing discrimination". Abul Momen, Binod Bihari Chowdhury, Mushitari Shafi, Razekuzzaman Raton, Hossain Kabir, Dr Hasan Shahidul Alam and Sayed Mujibul Huq were among those

who took part in the discussion on the topic.

The second session in afternoon was on "Fault in education system". Professor Khan Tawhid Osman, Abul Munsur, AQM Sirajul Islam, Dr. Mahbubul Huq, Akhter Kabir Chowdhury and Dilwar Hossain took part in the discussion on the topic among others.

The discussion will be held tomorrow on "Social status, qualification and pay-scale of the teachers" in the first session and "Aims and objectives of education and relevant thought" at the concluding session.

Prof Ershad Kamal Khan, Arun Das Gupta, Principal Misbahul Alam, and Prof Kazi Afzal Ahmed will discuss at the morning session among others while Prof Dr Anupam Sen, Prof Hasanuzzaman, Prof Dr Muhiuddin Alam, journalist Nasir Uddin, Mustafa Faruq and Zahurul Islam Majumder will discuss on the topics.



Lt Gen Md Nooruddin Khan Psc (Retd), Minister of Science and Technology, speaking at the 25th founding anniversary and installation ceremony of Lions Club of Dhaka South, District 315-B1 held recently at Hotel Abakash, Mohakhali in the city. Seen in the picture from left to right, Lt Muhaimin Saleh, Vice-district governor, Lt Sheikh Kabir Hossain PDG and ID Nominee, Lt Nishat Huq, Chairman, installation ceremony committee, Lt Rashid Maksud Khan, district governor and Lt SI Nizami, president.

Britain reluctantly set to freeze N Ireland govt

LONDON, Feb 7: The British government was expected Tuesday to move closer to reimposing direct rule over Northern Ireland after a bomb attack in the province served to emphasise the need for paramilitary disarmament, reports AFP.

The British parliament was on Tuesday to restart legislative proceedings to suspend Northern Ireland's new power-sharing government this week unless the IRA proves its is dismantling its weapons.

The government has given the group until Friday to break the deadlock, warning that if otherwise it will reimpose the direct rule that was discontinued in December, when historic new institutions were set up bringing Protestant unionists and Catholic republicans together in power-sharing bodies.

The need for a breakthrough was underscored on Sunday when a dissident republican group calling itself the Continuity IRA claimed a bomb which

exploded in a hotel in the Northern Irish town of Irvinestown.

No-one was injured in the blast, but it served as a telling reminder of the need to remove the guns from Northern Ireland.

If as is expected no guns are destroyed by the Friday deadline, London is thought likely to reimpose direct rule on the province.

John Hume, who is the leader of the moderate Catholic party the SDLP, urged the paramilitaries to hand over some weapons without delay.

But the very suggestion that the gunmen should give up their weapons was criticised by the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein.

Its chief negotiator Mitchell McLaughlin said: "It is hard to imagine a more inappropriate moment to make that particular suggestion given the confusion, the tension and the pressures that are on at the moment."



Illegally set up shops on roadsides at city's Kalyanpur area were demolished yesterday by Roads and Highways Department.

— Star photo

Lebanese forces put on red alert against Israeli attack

Barak vows retaliation

BEIRUT, Feb 7: The Lebanese defence forces were put on maximum alert late Sunday in case Israel attempts any reprisals after a Hezbollah attack which killed one Israeli soldier and wounded seven others in southern Lebanon, a Lebanese security official said, reports AFP.

The Lebanese defence forces are in a state of maximum alert in all the regions of Lebanon, in readiness for any Israeli aggression," the official told journalists on condition of remaining anonymous.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak earlier vowed retaliation, and Saturday Israel suspended even informal contacts with Hezbollah's Syrian sponsors. The Lebanese alert marks a sharp deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, already at a tense point because of Israel's decision, a source close

to the Lebanese government told.

The Israeli casualties occurred when the Syrian and Iranian-backed guerrillas hit an Israeli military patrol in the Blat area, in the western part of the zone, Israeli security sources said.

The Shi'ite Muslim fundamentalist group said in a statement that its forces had detonated a powerful bomb at 12:30 pm (1030 GMT), as patrol of nine Israeli infantrymen passed by on their way to their position at Blat.

Israel said three of its soldiers were wounded by the bomb. A 20-year-old non-commissioned officer was killed and four other soldiers wounded as they sought to evacuate the injured, it said.

"The injuries are extremely

severe, four soldiers have not regained consciousness, they are undergoing very serious and complex operations," said a doctor at Rambam hospital in the Israeli city of Haifa where the injured were being treated.

Israeli Brigadier-General Moshe Kaplinsky said that the patrol's dog most probably set off the roadside bomb and prevented a potentially more deadly attack.

Speaking in Amman, Barak responded stridently to the attack, denying that he was pursuing a no-retaliation policy against Hezbollah in south Lebanon in a bid to avoid jeopardising peace talks with Syria.

"Israel is going to hit whoever is hitting her in south Lebanon," Barak said after talks in Jordan with King Abdullah II.

India denounces Afghan plane hijacking

NEW DELHI, Feb 7: India today denounced the hijacking of an Ariana airline jet in Afghanistan, reports AFP.

"We are following it. We deplore terrorism in all its forms including the hijacking of aircraft," a foreign ministry spokesman told reporters.

"We remain concerned about the safety and welfare of innocent civilians on board the hijacked aircraft."

An Ariana Boeing 727 was hijacked on Sunday as it left Kabul airport on a domestic flight and was forced to fly to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and then Moscow before it landed Monday at Stansted airport, near London, where police were negotiating with the hijackers.

SA to tag & release 30,000 prisoners

CAPE TOWN, Feb 7: South Africa announced plans today to fit tens of thousands of prisoners with electronic tags and release them back into society from 2001 to make space in the country's overcrowded prisons, reports AFP.

The decision follows a successful three-year experiment under which 304 prisoners were released in and around the capital Pretoria, Correctional Services Minister Ben Skosana told a media briefing.

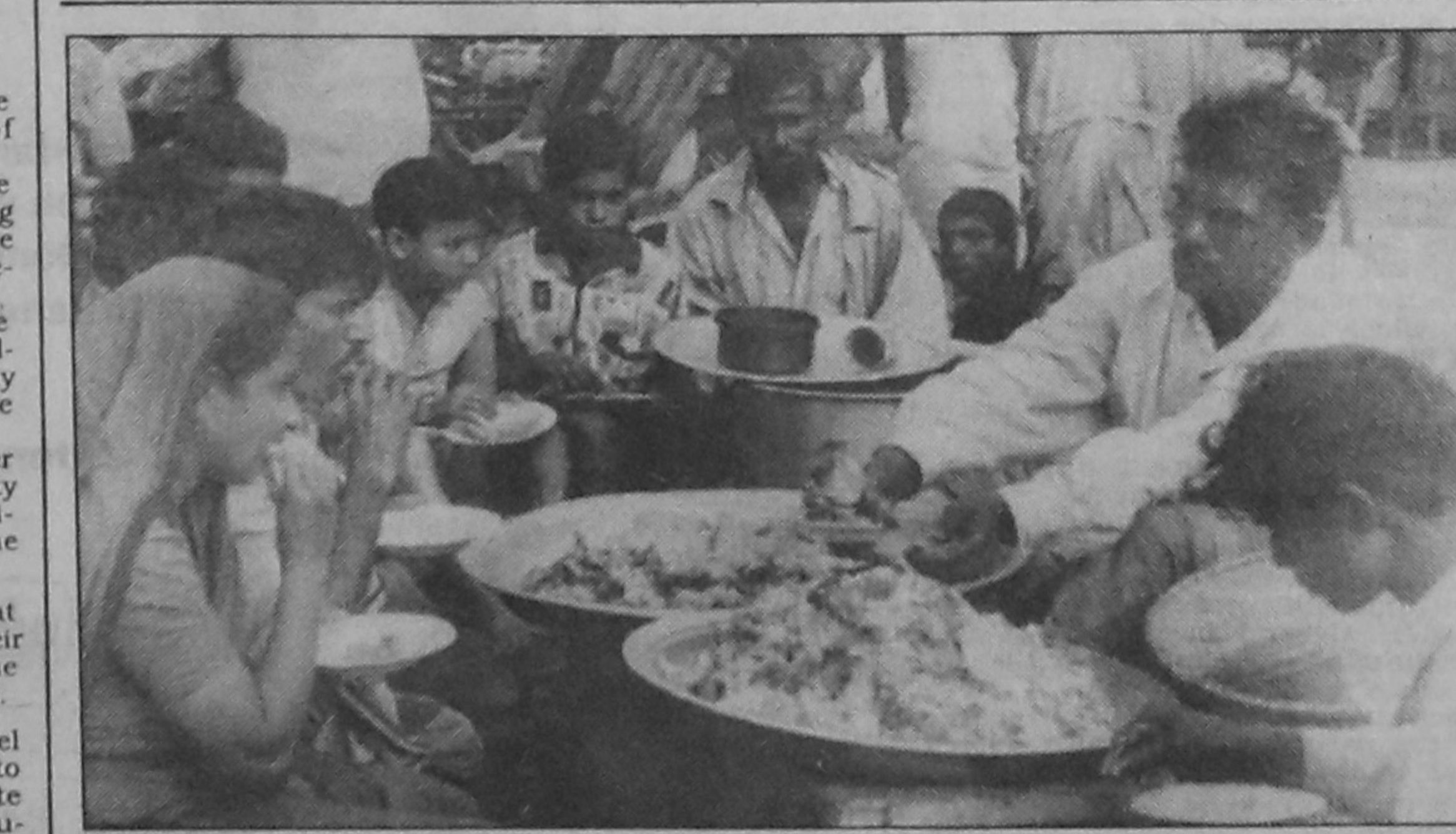
"Ninety-eight percent did not abscond and it cost us 13 rand (about two dollars) a day to tag them," he said.

Skosana said his ministry now had "ambitious plans" to release 30,000 prisoners in this way over the next three years

alone. South Africa's 231 prisons, which were built to house 99,000 inmates, are severely overcrowded. They currently hold more than 151,000 criminals and prisoners awaiting trial, according to ministry figures.

Skosana said electronic monitoring was cheaper than the 14-dollar-a-day cost of imprisonment, and more effective than physical surveillance which could not guarantee that released prisoners would not go missing.

The ministry has employed a consultant to design a monitoring device suitable to South African conditions and it should be ready by the end of the year, he said.



Makeshift foodstalls set up on sidewalks are popular with the poorer section of people in the city. The people seen in the city are taking lunch from