

Maintain ethics of journalism, help strengthen democracy

President urges media people

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday sought supporting role of the media in attaining national progress as Bangladesh is now on the road to development and making its endeavour towards flourishing democratic process.

"It is our sacred responsibility to nourish and foster this development process through concerted efforts so that a happy and prosperous country is established," he said, urging media personnel, both from print and electronic, to come forward in materialising hopes and aspirations of the people.

The president made the call while speaking at the re-launching ceremony of the English daily 'The

Bangladesh Today' at the chief guest at Hotel Sonargaon. Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif attended the programme as the special guest.

Iajuddin called upon the media people to maintain the ethics of journalism and bring out objective news with a sense of obligation to the nation.

"As you know, accuracy, objectivity, patriotism and public accountability are some of the vital elements of code of ethics in journalism, which should be upheld," he said.

He observed that a good newspaper is the mirror of society that reflects the overall development and affairs of a nation in its true perspective.

He said the role of newspapers,

however, is of paramount importance in building a prosperous society as well as a nation.

Terming Bangladesh as a 'developing country', he said the country has been facing different problems and striving hard to attain the cherished development goals since its independence.

"Against this backdrop, newspapers have significant role in helping and fostering the development process through its constructive treatment."

He said the media, both print and electronic, are enjoying freedom of expression in Bangladesh at present. "In this circumstance, the responsibility of media is much higher than that of anything else."

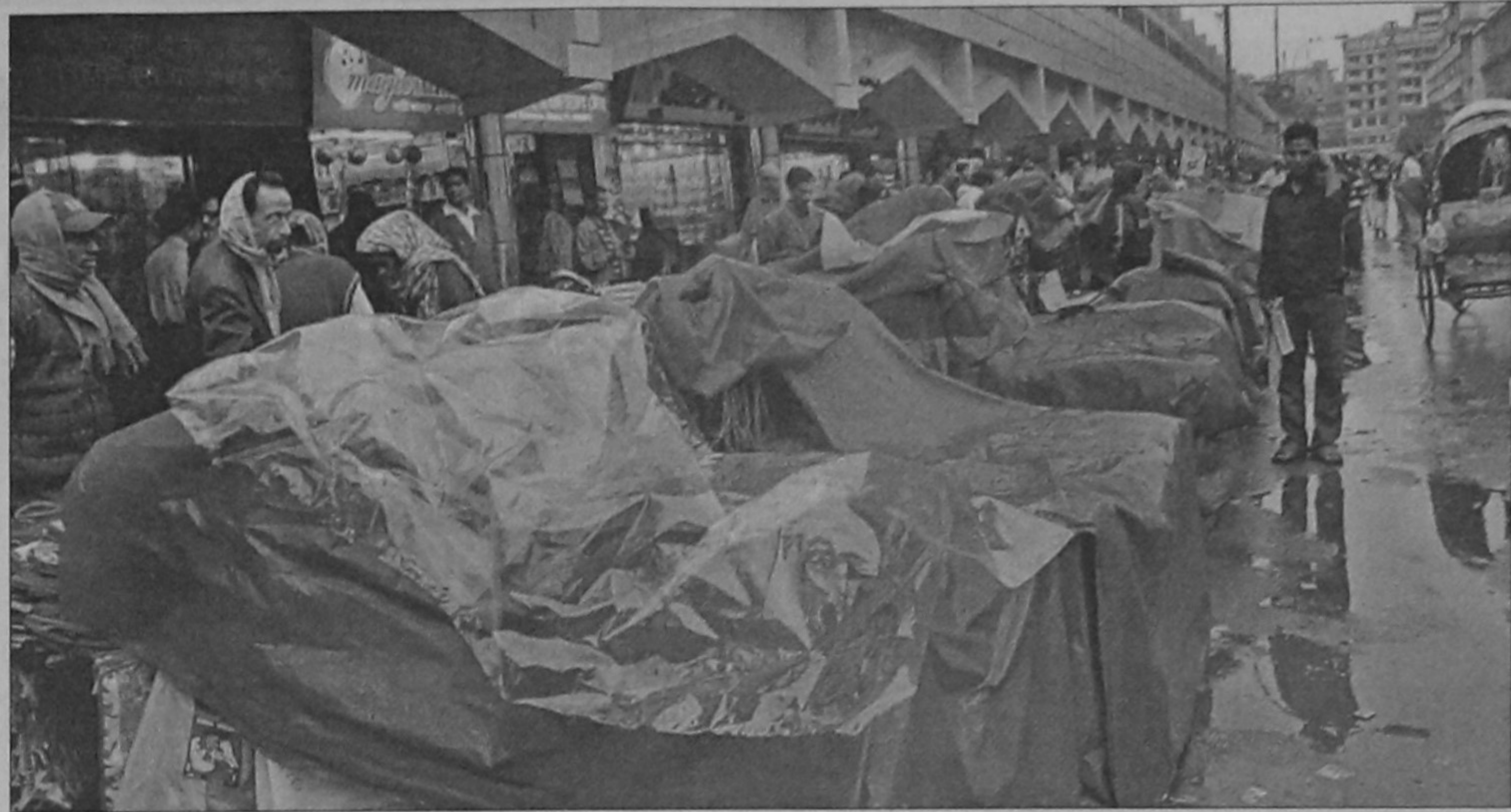
The president observed that the

ethics and standards of journalism are very important in this free atmosphere of expression.

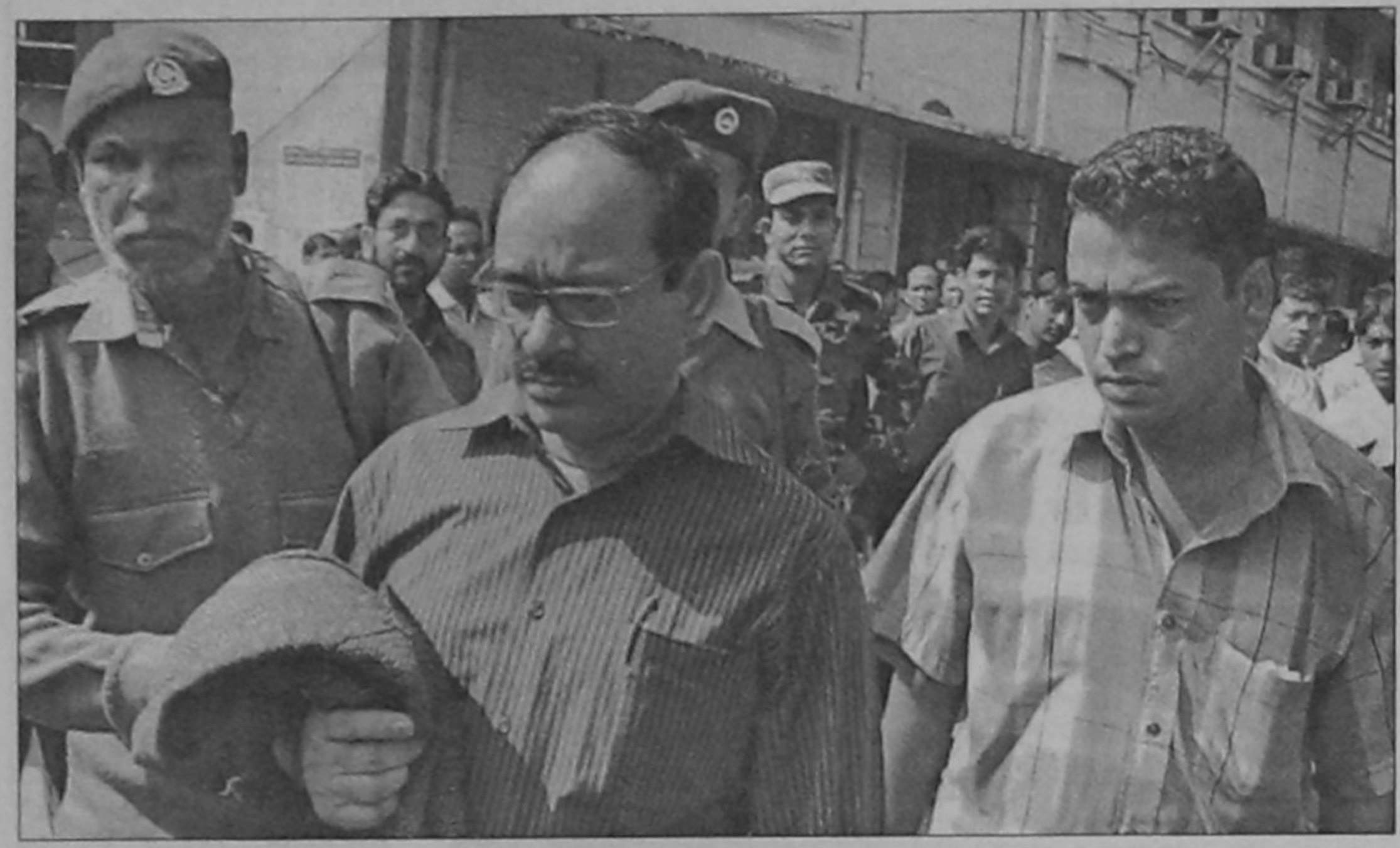
He said the press, which is considered very important instrument to influence policy formulation of the government, can play a pivotal role in ensuring good governance and transparency in every level of national life.

"Newspaper is very responsive to address the social issues and helps in building awareness to solve the problems," he told the function, adding that it also helps in disseminating knowledge and idea throughout the territory.

"Therefore, we should pay our sincere attention to circulating a responsible newspaper keeping national interest above."



Inclement weather brings the business of street vendors to almost a halt yesterday as they have to wrap their items to protect them from rain. This picture was taken in Baitul Mukarram Mosque area.



Members of joint forces arrested Customs Appraiser Abdur Razzak, second from left, on charge of receiving bribe and C & F Employee Shahjada, right, for giving bribe to Razzak at Chittagong Customs House in the port city yesterday. (Story on Page 2)

Biswa Ijtema

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religious congregation.

Biswa Ijtema, second largest religious congregation of the Muslims after hajj, begins today on the bank of the river Turag. At least three million people from about 58 countries are expected to join.

Defying the weather, Muslim scholars started delivering sermons yesterday.

Witnesses said gunny canopies could not save the devotees from the relentless rain that started in the morning. The situation became worse when the entire 5-km Ijtema ground turned muddy.

The canopies and mats were damaged in the rain and the devotees had to collect more. Many of them collected polythene as an alternative since they were cost-effective. Many of the elderly devotees had to take shelter at various mosques and other places adjacent to the Ijtema ground.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) (Circle) Masud Ahmed, one of the coordinators of the event, told The Daily Star, "The sufferings of devotees intensified due to the cold wave, relentless rain and since all the makeshift toilets were damaged."

He said there is no way to reduce their sufferings if the weather continued this way.

Witnesses said despite the bad weather, thousands of devotees from across the country and abroad thronged the Ijtema ground yesterday by buses, trains, launches and even on foot.

Law enforcers were overwhelmed in trying to control the huge number of people coming in and there were traffic jams all day on many roads in the area.

The law enforcers, however, arrested 53 pickpockets yesterday and on Wednesday at the Ijtema ground.

Masud Ahmed said, "We arrested 17 pickpockets Thursday and 36 today. Of them 43 were produced before a court while the rest would be taken to court tomorrow [today]."

About 12,000 security personnel from police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Ansar have been deployed to ensure security.

A few hundred members of various intelligence agencies will also be deployed at the venue. Bomb disposal units from the army and Rab have also been deployed and several mobile courts are operating. Thirty-five medical camps are providing medical care for the devotees.

Commander SMAK Azad, director of Legal and Media Wing of Rab, told The Daily Star that there will be patrols on the roads and waterways nearby and choppers will be flying above to ensure security.

He said, "The entire Ijtema ground has been divided into five sectors and 48 CCTV cameras have been installed. Besides, three monitoring centres and a number of observation towers have been set up at different points."

PRESENTER'S AND CHIEF ADVISER'S MESSAGES

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed issued separate messages on the occasion of the Biswa Ijtema.

President Iajuddin Ahmed in his message termed the great tenets of Islam the guiding principles for human beings. He said the Biswa Ijtema plays a significant role in rapid dissemination of Islamic ideals and lessons of the Quran and Sunnah across the globe.

He called upon all to build their lives "imbued with the great Islamic ideology and devote themselves to the welfare of the country".

The chief adviser in his message stressed the importance of Biswa Ijtema in establishing universal peace and strengthening unity, solidarity and fraternity in the Muslim world.

Bird flu poses global threat

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improved and many newly infected countries have managed to eliminate the virus from poultry," he added.

"But the H5N1 avian influenza crisis is far from over and remains particularly worrying in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Egypt, where the virus has become deeply entrenched despite major control efforts," Domenech said.

He said countries should continue to keep a close eye on the evolving situation. "The virus has not become more contagious to humans but has managed to persist in parts of Asia, Africa and probably Europe. It could still trigger a human influenza pandemic," he warned.

Commenting on individual countries, he said India is struggling to keep the worst-ever avian influenza outbreak in West Bengal under control. Indonesia remains one of the worst affected countries with 31 out of 33 provinces infected since 2004, many heavily. The continuing number of human cases gives cause for concern.

"We observed that new H5N1 avian influenza virus strains have recently emerged in Indonesia with the possible effect that vaccines

currently in use may not be fully protecting poultry against the disease. This requires more investigations and the development of better poultry vaccines," he said.

The government of Indonesia and FAO, on behalf of the network of OIE/FAO international reference laboratories, are working together in implementing a virus monitoring programme to examine the problem more carefully.

In Bangladesh, 21 out of 64 districts have been infected with H5N1 and the situation seems to be worsening. The disease appears to be endemic in the country, surveillance and control campaigns have so far not succeeded in interrupting virus transmission between provinces. FAO is strengthening its presence in Bangladesh to support the government in its efforts to bring the disease under control.

In Europe, Germany, Poland, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom reported new avian influenza outbreaks recently.

"The detection and immediate response in all countries, especially in the European Union, is very effective," Domenech said. "But we are seeing virus infections in poultry that are not transmitted by wild

birds. This raises questions about other ways of virus transmission and potential reservoirs of infection, like in free ranging ducks," he added.

With FAO's assistance, more than 50 countries have been able to control and eliminate the disease in poultry.

"Surveillance and immediate control interventions, bio-security, proper vaccination and culling and the strengthening of veterinary services are key elements for successful H5N1 avian influenza control campaigns," Domenech said.

Scores slash veins in Russian prison protest

AFP, Moscow

Scores of inmates slashed their veins in a protest at a prison camp in far eastern Russia, local prosecutors said in a statement yesterday.

A total of 142 prisoners harmed themselves during the unrest on January 16 at the Taghtamygda camp in the Amur region, which borders China, prosecutors said.

"They cut themselves around the shoulders using blades from the disposable razors they are allowed to use," the statement said.

Greeks begin clearing migrants' camp at port

AFP, Patras

Officials in the western port of Patras have begun razing a camp where hundreds of illegal immigrants, mainly Afghan, spend months waiting to sneak on to Italy-bound ferries, police said yesterday.

The operation began on Wednesday with the destruction of a dozen wooden shacks but most inhabitants were given a few days to vacate the camp after talks with police, Greek Red Cross official Nikos Komplias told AFP.

The city authorities of Patras, Greece's second largest port that handles the bulk of passenger traffic to Italy, had been clamouring for years for the destruction of the camp, which initially housed mainly Kurds and Iraqis.

The police finally intervened following a request from the owner of the site where the makeshift camp sprang up.

Bomangs mark

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cultivators pay their annual taxes, along with traditional gifts -- two bottles of wine and two large roosters -- as part of their respect to King Aong Swe Prue Choudhury, the 15th king of the Bomang tribe.

Despite it being a time to pay taxes, the occasion is marked by a celebration through a gathering and cultural exchange among people of different tribes, Bangalis and even foreigners.

In the morning, the King took his place and inaugurated the ceremony in the presence of his guards bearing knives and guns as part of tradition. A three-day fair has been organised to mark Rajpunnah.

King Aong Swe Prue said, "It is a matter of pride that the image of the tribe, founded in early 14th century, has not been tarnished despite many ups and downs throughout the rules of the Mughals, British and Pakistan."

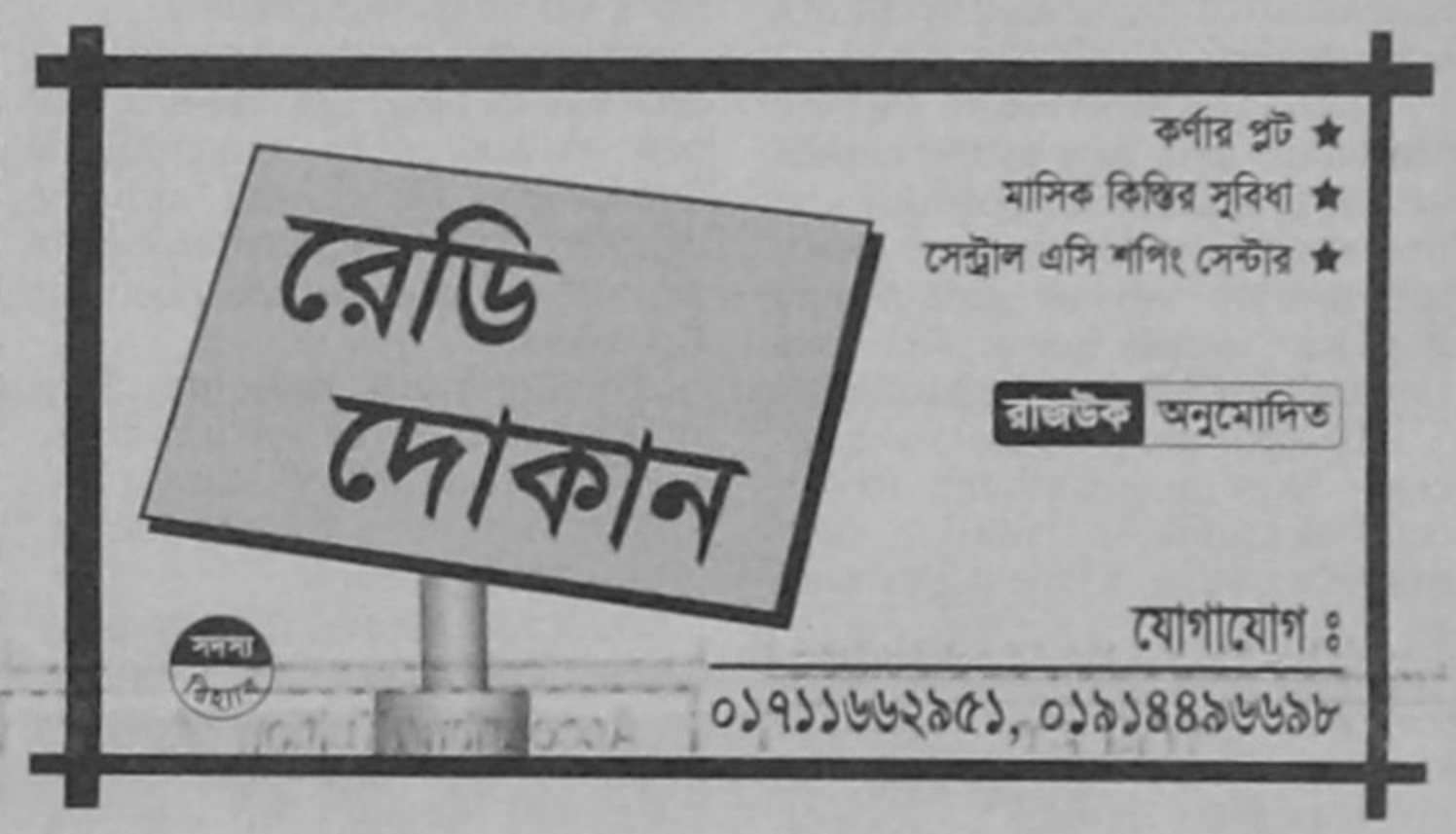
The 15th king of the Bomang

tribe said that Bomang Kings are traditionally not repressive which has actually kept their authority in place over generations.

He made a donation of Tk 50,000 for the Sidr victims last year.

The UNDP representative present at the ceremony said, "Bangladesh can take pride on the communal harmony and peaceful co-existence of different tribes and religious groups that exist in the region."

Bandarban Army Brigade Commander Brig Gen M Mahfuzur Rahman, Bandarban Hill District Council Chairman Professor Thanjama Lusai, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mazid Shah Akand, acting Police Superintendent Sayeed Mahmud Tareq, UNDP Chittagong Hill Tracts Project Director Robert Rajkumar Cha Hla Pru Jimi, Rajkumar U Cha Prue and Headman Mong Thoi Ching Marma were present among others at the ceremony.



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Interested candidates please send full c/v with two recent photograph and two references before 5th February 2008.



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Duration and Schedule: February 17 to March 27, 2008 (6 weeks)

Phase 1: 17 Feb-6 March 2008 in Dhaka (3 weeks); **Field Work:** 9-20 March 2008 at Worksite (2 weeks); **Phase 2:** 23-27 March 2008 in Dhaka (1 week).

APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 10, 2008

Apply to: Dr. Farah Mahjabeen, JGPSH, BRAC University, 66 Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212
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