

Introduce aptitude tests for students for quality edn

Says Dr Akbar Ali Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regulatory Reforms Commission Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday called for introduction of aptitude tests such as Graduate Record Examination (GRE) at the university level and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) at the SSC level in order to improve the quality of education.

"The quality of entire education system from primary to university level is very poor. At the tertiary education level, the quality of education in private universities is the worst. We should introduce GRE in public and private universities to ensure quality in higher

education. Besides, the government should introduce SAT at SSC level," he said at a roundtable at the chief guest.

He also said Bangladeshi students get very little time to interact with their teachers because of too many holidays in the educational institutions and absence of teachers during working hours.

"A student needs to attend classes totalling a minimum of 860 hours in a year, but our children do not get such facilities. Around 19 percent teachers remain absent during working hours. Apart from official holidays, our children enjoy holidays during month-long SSC and HSC examinations," he said.

The daily Shamokal and BSB-Cambrian College jointly organised the roundtable on 'National education policy: Our education system' at Grand Azad Hotel in the city.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, also a former adviser to the caretaker government, said regional disparities, especially urban-rural gap, have emerged due to the existing centralised education system.

He also said the quality of technical education in the country is also very poor and that it is high time to recast the technical education system to produce technically skilled people.

Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui,

former vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, said discrimination between government and non-government schools will have to be eliminated for the greater interest of the nation.

Dhaka University Teachers Association (Duta) General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain called for an increase in the budget for general education.

Prof Ajoy Roy suggested introducing a science-based uni-track education system for all.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Salma Akhtar, Prof Quazi Faruque Ahmed and Dr Karunamay Goswami also spoke.

DU teachers to wear black badges today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The teachers of Dhaka University (DU) will take classes and examinations wearing black ribbons today demanding immediate withdrawal of the state of emergency.

The decision was taken at a general meeting of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) at the association's club building on April 13.

Former president of Duta Prof Arefin Siddique yesterday told The Daily Star that "We will go to classrooms and take exams tomorrow (today) wearing black badges. As it is an unanimous decision of Duta meeting, teachers will participate in the programme simultaneously."

He said the state of emergency could be imposed for a limited period of time due to a particular reason, but it cannot be welcomed for years after years.

Dhaka welcomes Nepal election results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Iftakhar A Chowdhury welcomed the Nepalese election results, saying that the Bangladesh government would be happy to work with any democratically elected government.

"The people of Nepal appear to have spoken in what is being seen as a free and fair election," he said in a press release issued by the foreign ministry.

"Bangladesh would be happy and prepared to deal with any government they will have chosen," he said.

"Bangladesh values her friendship with Nepal and it is our wish to work closely with the government of the people's choice in Kathmandu to deepen and widen our relationship," Iftakhar added.

Nepal's Maoist Communist party is currently on track to winning the landmark elections held last Thursday.

Int'l experts meet in Philippines for earthquake exercise

AFP, Subic Bay

Some 300 rescue and disaster experts from 18 countries held exercises in the Philippines to prepare and improve the emergency response to massive earthquakes.

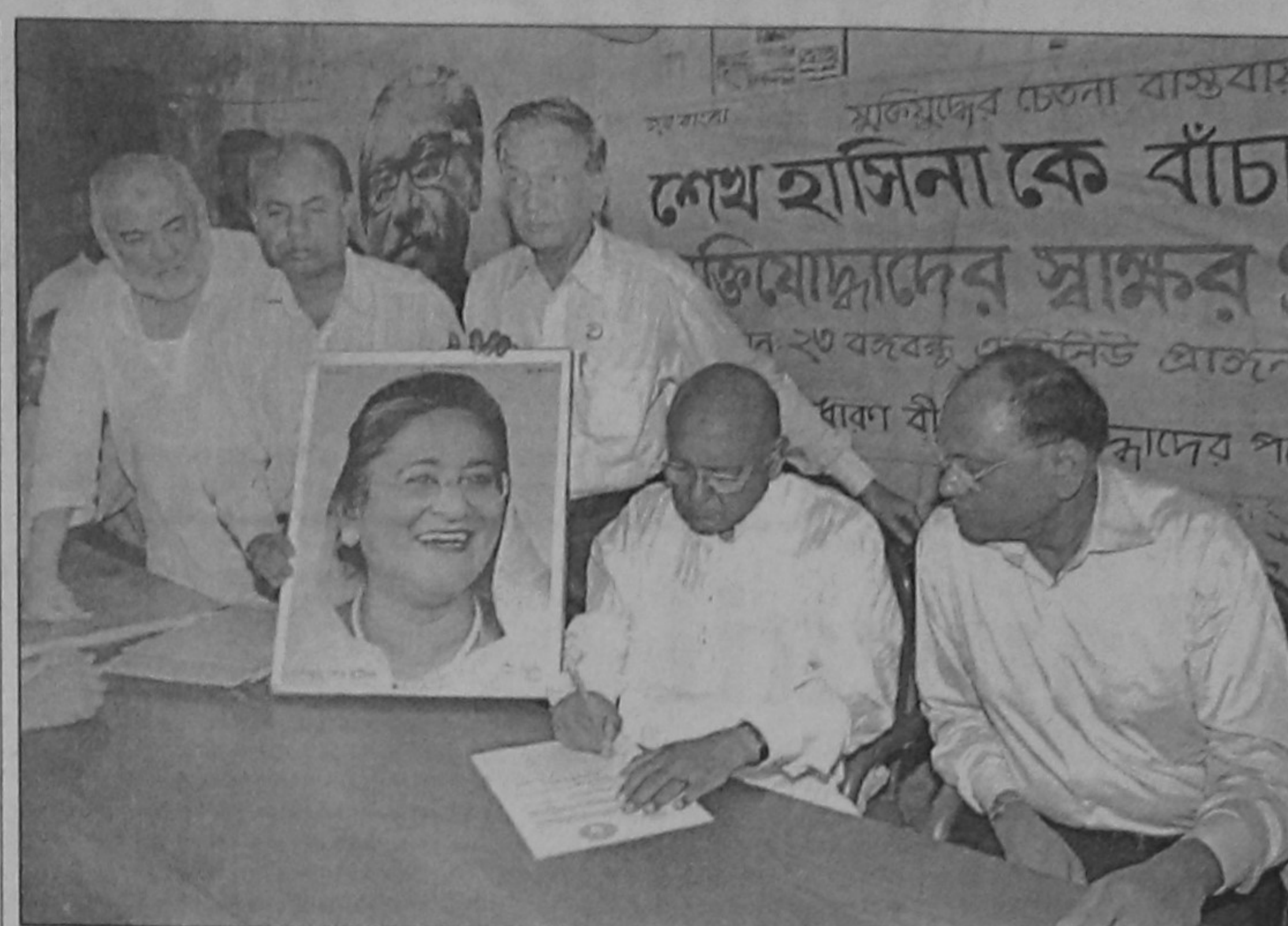
The quake exercises at Subic Bay, the biggest in recent memory, included government and non-government rescue teams from the United States, Germany, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, India, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the Philippines and other countries.

Participants engaged in rescue exercises using deserted buildings in this former US naval base to simulate the effects of a massive quake hitting the Philippine capital Manila.

The gathering, sponsored by the local civil defence office and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, also included technical discussions on the needs of rescuers such as the number of personnel, equipment, training and coordination.

"Response preparedness compels us all to plan, rehearse and to improve our operational readiness," said Nileema Noble, UN resident coordinator in the Philippines, adding such efforts would help save lives and minimise injuries in the event of disaster.

The meeting, which ends on Thursday, is also intended to allow rescue teams to exchange information and discuss their various experiences, officials said.



Awami League presidium member Tofail Ahmed inaugurates a mass signature campaign demanding the release of party President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday.

Make remittance transfer mechanism transparent

Speakers at a consultation have called for making remittance transfer mechanisms more transparent and accountable, says a press release.

They also urged the money transfer agencies to lower the fees and establish fair exchange rates.

The national consultation on 'Remittances and Corporate Social Responsibility of Money Transfer Institutions' was organised jointly by Warbe Development Foundation and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at Dhaka Reporters' Unit on Tuesday.

Quoting World Bank figures, keynote speaker Debayani Kar of Migrant Forum in Asia and Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action, informed that migrants send back home more than US\$ 300 billion annually, of which US\$ 260 billion flow to the developing countries.

She said the governments, along with businesses and international financial institutions, view migrants as the newest market to tap into.

She regretted that despite such positive contribution, migrants' rights are often overlooked.

In this context, she urged the

governments and the money transfer industry not to overlook their responsibilities towards remitters and demanded that they undertake programmes to improve their services to migrants and reinvest the profits for the benefit of migrant communities.

Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, underscored the fact that migrant workers are often socially excluded.

He called for an attitudinal change in all sectors to recognise the positive contribution of migrants.

Explaining the concept of corporate social responsibility, Dr Ahmad stated that private companies and banks that benefit from transfer of remittances should invest in skill development of migrants, support research initiatives on labour migration and provide loan to migrants so that they do not have to sell property to finance migration.

Anisur Rahman Khan, secretary general of Warbe Development Foundation, asked the money transfer institutions to undertake welfare activities for the migrant communities.

Mohammad Abdul Mannan of

Islami Bank said specialised investment products should be developed targeting the migrant workers and members of their families.

He said banks should be allowed to post more representatives in labour receiving countries.

Farida Akhter of Ubiniq said the re-integration programmes may be financed by companies that profit from money transfer business.

In his address as chair, Dr C R Abrar observed that migrants often have to pay hefty sums as fees for remitting money.

He called upon the money transfer companies to initiate and support projects that directly benefit migrants and members of their families.

He urged the government to frame a migrant protection law for remittance transfer that would ensure that remitter is adequately informed about the fees, the exchange rate and transfer time involved.

Nazrul Islam of Agrani Bank, AKM Mosharraf Hossain of Bangladesh Krishi Bank and Ashit Das of AIN O Salish Kendra took part in the consultation that was attended by representatives from Unifem, IOM, Acils and Brac.



Pro-reform BNP Secretary General Maj (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin speaks at a meeting of his faction at Elegant Community Centre in the city yesterday.

Donors for comprehensive housing plan for Sidr victims

Red Cross, Red Crescent warn of housing crisis during monsoon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies yesterday warned that the scale of the destruction wrought by cyclone Sidr is too massive for the aid agencies to provide meaningful assistance to all of those in dire need, says a press release.

The Societies warned of housing crisis as the cyclone victims enter monsoon season.

"With only weeks to go before start of the monsoon rains, hundreds of thousands of families are still living under plastic sheeting, tarpaulins and other basic shelters which leave them at the mercy of the elements," said the release.

"The combined efforts of all aid agencies as well as bilateral government pledges for core housing are likely to reach around 60,000-affected families. But this is only a fraction of those who need help," said Head of Shelter for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Graham Saunders on behalf of the global Emergency Shelter Cluster and the operational shelter agencies in Bangladesh.

Aid agencies, therefore, urged the Bangladesh government and the international community to implement a comprehensive plan for ensuring safe and adequate shelter to the affected families.

The release also said millions of Bangladeshis still remain in dire need of housing assistance even five months after the cyclone that killed around 4,000 people and destroyed nearly 1.5 million homes.

"More than 260,000 extremely vulnerable families are currently not getting any assistance to rebuild their homes. Assessments indicate

that these families have very limited means for their survival and there are simply not sufficient programmes in the pipeline to help them," Graham Saunders said.

Care Country Director Nick Southern said, "The monsoon season is approaching and a broad range of activities needs to be undertaken now by the government and the international community."

"And we're not just talking about shelter without a roof over their heads, people are also exposed to serious health and hygiene risks. The situation is deeply worrying," added Nick.



Members of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation collect money on Dhaka University campus yesterday to raise funds for the country's hunger-stricken people.

'Check price hike of essentials'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (BCF), a left-leaning student body, yesterday staged a demonstration on Dhaka University (DU) campus urging the government to control the price hike of essentials.

They set four-point demands including launching of rationing system and introducing subsidy in the agriculture sector.

The BCF leaders and activists brought out a procession, held a rally and arranged an exhibition of newspaper clippings, satirical cartoons and posters in front of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) building to press home their demands.

Leaders said a famine-like situation has been prevailing across the country and the government has completely failed to solve the food crisis.

They said government is yet to take any sort of effective actions against the business syndicates who are deliberately increasing prices of essentials.

They urged the students to participate in their fund-raising campaign for providing assistance to the poor people of the remote areas of the country, which will be continued until April 22.

BCF central unit General Secretary Julhasnine Babu, DU unit President Lubana Tabassum and General Secretary Saikat Mallik spoke at the rally.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

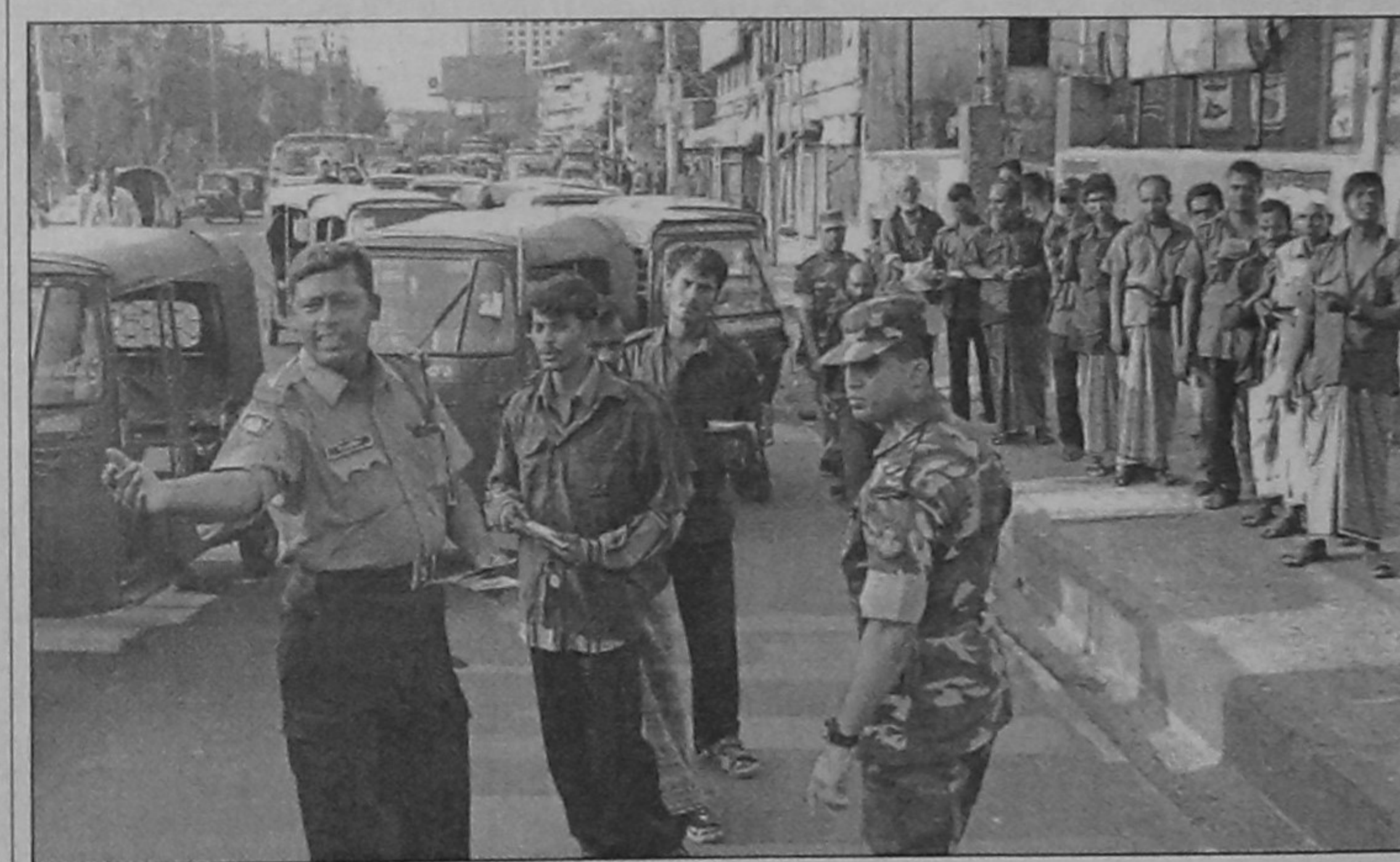
Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country during the period, Met Office said, predicting slight rise in day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 35.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 21.4 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:21pm today and rises at 5:35am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.0	26.5	75	59
Chittagong	31.2	24.7	69	76
Rajshahi	35.4	25.2	78	66
Khulna	35.0	25.8	76	65
Barisal	34.2	25.5	76	65
Sylhet	33.8	22.7	87	66
Cox's Bazar	34.0	24.4	63	72



Members of the law enforcement agencies check the driving licences and papers of vehicles during a drive in Chittagong city yesterday. The photo was taken from the Chittagong Wasa area yesterday. Joint forces will launch similar drives in different areas of the port city without any prior notice.

Japan, Sweden pledge to intensify cooperation on climate change

AFP, Tokyo

Japan and Sweden yesterday pledged to step up cooperation on tackling climate change during a visit here by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt.

The Swedish premier said he agreed with Japanese counterpart Yasuo Fukuda on the need for major emitters of greenhouse gases to be included in any international agreement on curbing carbon dioxide emissions.

Japan's leading position in energy efficiency and its similar view to Sweden on fighting global warming "make it very important to have a close cooperation regarding climate change," he added.

Fukuda stressed the importance of the talks between Japan - which will host the Group of Eight summit in July -- and Sweden, which will assume the European Union presidency in the second half of 2009.

He said the two leaders "con-

firmed cooperation on various issues facing the international community, such as climate change and peace-building."

Japan, home of the Kyoto Protocol, hopes the G8 summit will give direction to negotiations on drafting the next global treaty on fighting climate change by the end of 2009.

Kyoto's commitments to curb harmful gas emissions run out in 2012. Fast-growing emitters such as China and India had no obligations under Kyoto, leading the United States to boycott the treaty.

Reinfeldt also made a courtesy call on Emperor Akihito as part of his four-day official visit.

Sweden is not a member of the G8, which groups Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

However, cooperation with the European Union is seen as key to Japan's hopes of taking a leading role in tackling climate change.

But Tokyo has been cautious

about an EU-led proposal for further binding cuts in CO2 emissions, stressing the need to bring developing countries on board.

100 Tibetans held in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

Police in Nepal's capital detained over 100 Tibetan exiles yesterday as they tried to protest outside a Chinese embassy building in Kathmandu for the second day running, police said.

"We have detained 116 protesters near the Chinese embassy," said police officer Horn Jung Chauhan.

"They are being held in various police stations and will be released later Wednesday evening," the police officer said.

Nepal is home to at least 20,000 Tibetans, who began arriving in large numbers in 1959 after the Dalai Lama fled Tibet following a failed uprising against the Chinese.

Charges pressed against former NBR member, his wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against a former member of National Board of Revenue (NBR) and his wife in a case filed for amassing wealth through illegal means.

Investigating Officer (IO) ACC Deputy Assistant Director Mahmud Hassan submitted the charge sheet against ATM Sarwar Hossain and Nazma Sarwar to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 23 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrants against the couple and the order to attach their properties, as they have been absconding since the case was filed.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against them were primarily proved and they should be brought under trial.

On January 10, the ACC filed the case against them with Gulshan police for committing the offences.

In the first information report (FIR), the complainant said Sarwar was accused of accumulating illegal wealth worth Tk 1.50 crore while his wife was accused of abetting his husband in acquiring the assets.

Factory of fake powdered drink unearthed

2 owners arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday busted an illegal factory manufacturing fake powdered drink at Zinjira in Keraniganj and arrested its two owners yesterday.

During the 10-hour raid that began at 5:30am, the elite force also seized 50,000 sachets of counterfeit 'Tang', 40 sacks of chemicals and various equipment worth around Tk 1.5 crore.

The arrestees are Selim alias Morsalin and Nazimuddin. Their other partner, however, managed to escape.

The members of Rab-10 said they started collecting information in the area after they came to know that a number of local people fell ill after drinking the powdered drink.

"Finally, we detected the unauthorised factory and launched the drive," said Assistant Superintendent of Police Nurul Amin, who led the drive.

The Rab officials said the sachets they seized do not have any manufacturing or expiry dates.

The chemicals found in the factory were destroyed on the spot.

UP member held for taking bribe

A CORRESPONDENT, Madanipur

A union parishad (UP) member under Rajoir upazila in Madanipur was arrested yesterday on charge of taking bribe from a woman in exchange for providing her a VGD (Vulnerable Group Development) card.

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Haider Ali Khan, 42, a member of Amgram Union Parishad, when he was taking Tk 1,000 as bribe from Papi Begum.

Obituary

Sanjib Chandra Saha, a popular senior teacher of Ataturk Model High School in Daganbhuia, Feni, died of cardiac and kidney complications at Labaid Cardiac Hospital in the city on Tuesday at the age of 60, says a press release.

He was hospitalised following a cardiac arrest and underwent bypass surgery but could not recover even after more than a week struggling for life at the ICU.

He left behind twin daughters, a son-in-law, a host of relations and friends and numerous students to mourn his death.

Death anniversary

Today is the 37th death anniversary of Dr Sujauddin Ahmed and his elder brother Mofazzal Ahmed, both are freedom fighters, says a press release.

They were brutally killed by the Pakistani occupational forces in 1971.

Shabnam Huq

Today is the 8th death anniversary of Shabnam Huq, wife of Arham Masudul Huq, executive vice president and company secretary, Dhaka Bank Ltd, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quarkhwani and doa mahfil will be held at Rahmat-e-Alam Islam Mission Orphanage at Teigaon in the city.

All have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.