

What's on today

Closing ceremony: The closing and prize distribution ceremony of the 40th annual sports of Dhaka Residential Model College will be held. Venue: College premises. Time: 2:30 pm.

Condolence meeting: Bangabandhu Parishad will hold a condolence meeting on Begum Sufia Kanai. Venue: Teachers Students Centre (TSC) auditorium, Dhaka University campus. Time: 3:00 pm.

BILIA memorial meeting: Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) will hold a memorial meeting in observance of the 36th death anniversary of Hossain Shahed Suhrawardy. Chief guest: Abdus Samad Azad, Foreign Minister. Venue: BILIA seminar room, House No 22, Rd No 7, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 5:30 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Regional seminar: A 3-day long regional seminar on 'Conflict of Management of International River Basins' will be inaugurated. Organiser: Department of Water Resources Engineering, BUET. Chief guest: Abdur Razzak, Minister for Water Resources. Venue: BUET. Time: 8:30 am.

Launching programme: The launching ceremony of Godrej Hair Day will be held. Organiser: Baraka Ltd. Venue: Panda Garden, Mohakhali. Time: 1:30 pm.

Launching ceremony: The launching ceremony of Kaniz Suborna's first audio cassette will be held. Organiser: Amra Kuri. Chief guest: A S M Abdur Rob, Minister for Fisheries and Livestock. Venue: Hotel Purbani International. Time: 4:30 pm.

Weather

Dry weather to continue

Dry weather will prevail over the country during next 12 hours till 6pm today, reports UNB.

Met Office said night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

The country's highest temperature yesterday was recorded at 31.0 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 12.2 degrees at Srirangal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:10 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:28 am.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	Max 29.4 Min 15.6	Morning 64 Evening 77
Chittagong	29.0	72
Rajshahi	28.6	77
Khulna	29.6	76
Barisal	29.4	81
Sylhet	29.1	86
Cox's Bazar	31.0	67

HERE and THERE

Bangladesh Short Film Forum

By Staff Correspondent

Aminul Islam and Junaed Ahmed Halim have been elected president and general secretary respectively of the Bangladesh Short Film Forum, the only organisation of short and independent filmmakers and activists in the country.

Other officials elected in the 19-member executive committee of the forum are: Tarique Shahin, vice-president; N Rashed Choudhury, executive secretary; Dewan Shamsur Raqib, finance secretary; Nurul Alam, publications secretary; Samir Ahmed, training and programme secretary; Shahidul Karim Manik, publicity secretary and Rezib-un-Nabi, office secretary.

Members of the executive committee are: A K M Zakaria, Mostafa Zaman Raihani, Ratan Kumar Paul, Aka Reza Galib, Kawsar Ahmed Khan, Syed Imran Hossain Kirmani, Siddique Sattar Ripon, Zahurul Islam Kachi and Joyanta Howladar.

The election was held at the Community Development Library in the city on Friday.

Dhaka Club

The annual general meeting and election of Dhaka Club Limited was held on Saturday at the club premises, says a press release.

Rezaur Rahman, Managing Director, Bengal Airlift Ltd, was re-elected unopposed as president of the Dhaka Club Limited for the year 1999-2000.

A 10-member executive committee was also elected. The members are: Md. Zafar Osman, Firoz N Khan, Md. Ayub Ali, Syed Shahed Reza, A S M Faruque, Mahmud Koli, Lutfi Najib Khan (Rumy), Major Quamrul Abedin (Redi), Kazi Faruq Kader (Babu) and Niaz Mahmood Khan (Boby).

CWRY

Speakers at a workshop on Saturday called for ensuring security to the garment workers to develop the sector which is earning the highest foreign currency, says a press release.

They also stressed the need for building up confidence among the workers to meet the challenge of the next millennium and globalisation.

The workshop on 'Confidence building activities for the workers of the garment sector regarding their status and security' was organised by the Child, Women Relief and You (CWRY) at its office premises in the city's Gulshan area.

The workshop, attended by a group of development workers, garment workers, leaders, lawyers and owners of the respective sector, was moderated by Fahima Nasreen, Project Director of the CWRY.

Dr. Ishrat Shamim of Sociology Department of the Dhaka University, Dr. Mohammed Akhteruzzaman, head of the Department of Forensic Medicine of the Faridpur Medical College Hospital, Roy Romesh Chandra, general secretary of the Bangladesh Truck Drivers' Union spoke on socio-economic aspects of garment sector and problems faced by its workers.

The workshop in its recommendation called upon the government to ensure social security to the garment workers by fulfilling their just demands and basic needs including human rights for economic emancipation of the country.

Mahila Parishad Mirpur branch

The Mirpur branch of the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in the city elected a 21-member new executive committee at the end of its 4th annual conference on Saturday, reports BSS.

Nurul Wara Begum and Kawsar Parveen were elected president and general secretary respectively of the committee, says a press release.

The conference, held at Mirpur Section 12, was presided over by Nurul Wara Begum. A number of central and city leaders including Shamsa Ara and Sarabata Tahir, Rekha Das Pirakalsha and Suria Chakraborty were present.

LAND

Dr. Qazi Faruque Ahmed, Chairperson and President, ADAB on Friday called for united efforts of all to establish the rights of the landless poor and involve them to the country's development activities, says a press release.

"Development of the country can not be achieved leaving aside the largest part of the population, who becomes capable to take part in the country's development activities," he said while speaking as the chief guest at the closing session of the conference of LAND member NGOs at Bwanomali Institute Auditorium in Pabna.

LAND (Land Network for Development) working with the landless poor organised a day long 'Staff Conference 99 of Member Organisations' where more than fifteen hundred officials from 44 NGOs took part to build up strong unity and solidarity among them and share working strategy, methodology and experience. Another objective of the conference was to present Samata's (leading NGO of the network) concept on land right movement, democratisation and gender issues.

Presided over by President of LAND and Executive Director of Samata Abdul Kader, the closing session of the conference was also addressed by Md. Shamsul Huda, Director, ADAB, Md. Afzal Hossain, ADAB Rajshahi Chapter Chairman, Md. Barkat Ali Bakul, Director, Dulai Janakalyan Sangstha and Nasiruddin Moinul, Director, Shromojibi.



British High Commissioner, David C Walker, speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the UK Trade Fair that opened at Hotel Sheraton yesterday. — Star photo

The turbulent days of '71
Rasulpur Killing Field: A silent witness to Pak atrocities

RASULPUR, Comilla: Dec 5: Rasulpur, a quiet and sleepy village adjacent to the railway track only 8 kilometres north of Comilla town, stands witness to the orgy of killings and arson committed by the Savage Pakistani soldiers during the turbulent days of the Liberation War in 1971, reports BSS.

An estimated 200 Bangladeshis were gunned down by the Pak soldiers and dumped in only three deep holes at Rasulpur Killing Field. The people of Rasulpur village had no option but to silently witness the atrocities and hideous crimes perpetrated by the Pak soldiers. Today Ali, octogenarian Sirajul Islam and Mozilul Islam of the same village, and many others today still shudder with the same shock and disbelief as they remember those dreadful days.

Mozilul Islam, a day labourer, is overwhelmed with grief and sorrow when he recalls the days of his ordeal. He escaped from the jaws of death miraculously. Razakars of the area had caught him and taken him to a nearby place where the army had set up camp. A large number of captives at the camp were kept locked in a house at night. During the day, they were employed to carry boxes of arms and ammunition to different places.

In the day time, the Pak soldiers spread out to surrounding villages and torched houses.

godowns, shops and any other establishments that came their way. There was arson and destruction all around. Mozilul and his co-captives witnessed the orgy of violence in silence but dared not protest. They had more on their mind. They were not even fed properly after their hard day's labour, but they still kept silent for fear of their lives.

Finally Mozilul was ordered to go to the killing field. His heart sank as he thought that his last hours had arrived. He saw a good number of people with their hands tied when he came to Rasulpur killing field. Some were asked to dig holes at the killing field which the Pak soldiers supervised.

Among the captives were about two dozen Hindus. Mozilul knew that these ill-fated persons would be gunned down soon. One of the victims was Samir. He was a Hindu. Mozilul knew him personally. He fell on the feet of some of the soldiers and claimed to be a Muslim to save his life. He even uttered the Kalima to convince the soldiers. Repeated pleadings softened the heart of a Pathan soldier at the killing field. He took pity on Samir and separated him from the line of people who were to be shot. But a Razakar present there came forward. He pulled down Samir's lungi to prove that this was no Muslim boy. A shower of

bullets took away poor Samir's life. He was hit with bayonet even after his death.

Mozilul himself counted his hours in fervent prayers to Allah for mercy. Nazir, a sepoy of the then East Pakistan Rifle arrived. Mozilul knew this non-Bengali sepoy from when Nazir was posted at Borojola EPR Camp. Mozilul pleaded with him for his life. Nazir spared him on the condition that he must not leave the army camp. Mozilul was thus saved and he spent his time in captivity digging holes at Rasulpur killing field for the burial of all who were shot dead by the brutal Pak soldiers.

One evening Mozilul was asked to fetch water from a nearby tubewell. He carried a few buckets of water from the tubewell. As the night deepened, Mozilul summoned enough courage and fled the camp under cover of darkness. He fled as far as he could and only returned home after the war was won.

Although a long time has elapsed after independence of Bangladesh, no initiative has yet been taken to excavate or examine the killing field. No memorial has been built either to remember those killed here. The story of Rasulpur Killing Field will be lost into oblivion if no initiative is taken right now to preserve it for the sake of correct documentation of our Liberation War.

Aceh rebels warn of more violence

LHOKSEUMAW, Indonesia: Dec 5: Separatist rebels and student leaders in Indonesia's restive province of Aceh today warned of more violence after the start next week of the Muslim fasting month, reports Reuters.

The warning comes a day after security forces opened fire on protesters in Aceh during the rebel anniversary, wounding at least 11 people.

During the fasting month... (Aceh) will receive extraordinary help from God... their blood will be boiling... think there will be more violence but I hope it will not be so," student leader Masruhin told.

He said that during last year's fasting month, locals had kidnapped security forces in retribution for past human rights abuses here.

The Ramadan fasting month starts in Indonesia on December 9.

Saturday's shooting marked an otherwise largely peaceful celebration of the 23rd anniversary of the Free Aceh rebel movement which has won growing support in the staunchly-Islamic province to

break away from Jakarta rule. Rebel spokesman Ismail Syahputra said it was the military which would most likely try to provoke an upsurge in violence.

"The Indonesian military always pushes us and the people to get violent," he told Reuters near Lhokseumawe, a rebel stronghold on the east coast of Aceh about 1,600 km (1,000 miles) northwest of Jakarta.

"For example, yesterday they took down our flags and we did not do anything. From that you can see they are always trying to provoke us," he said.

Analysts say years of often brutal military rule, coupled with Jakarta grabbing most of the province's large resource-based wealth, has bolstered support for the rebels.

But Aceh police chief Brigadier-General Bahrum Syah Kasman played down the chance of more violence, saying the worst was now over.

"Yesterday, the day passed relatively peacefully... and I can say that we passed the climax because before everyone was talking about mass unrest or even war but that didn't happen," Kasman told Reuters by

telephone. Kasman admitted that security forces had opened fire at protesters in the town of Sigli and nearby Pidie, but only after they heard shots coming from the crowd of protesters.

Today, the situation throughout Aceh appeared quiet with no reports of new violence.

Overnight, six coffee shops in Lhokseumawe were torched, but there were no casualties, residences said.

Illegal separatist flags, hoisted by the thousand on Saturday, had gone from major towns by today.

About the only flag seen by traveling reporters was draped around a monkey outside a Lhokseumawe police station.

But the major highways were still painted with the word "referendum," which growing numbers of Acehnese are demanding so that they can choose whether to set up an independent state.

The government says they can have a referendum on the introduction of Islamic law but has ruled out independence, something many fear would trigger the disintegration of Indonesia.

More funds needed to eradicate polio by 2000

GENEVA, Dec 5: The international effort to eradicate polio by late 2000 could fall short due to a lack of funds for acquiring the vaccines still needed by a handful of countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, reports IPS.

In an urgent call to donor countries, the directors of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Gro Harlem Brundtland, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, called for additional funds for the purchase of some 700 million doses.

Brundtland and Bellamy, with the backing of former Rotary International director Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, issued their call on Friday, World Disability Day.

The shortage of vaccines is due to the speed with which some countries have carried out mass eradication of the disease, they said. In massive campaigns last year, 450 million children were vaccinated. India doubled its efforts, immunising more than 130 million children under five.

"On this World Disability Day we urge donors to invest in the Polio Eradication Initiative which will bring annual saving of 1.5 billion dollars to tackle other disabilities," said Brundtland.

The international community has already saved some two billion dollars a year in immunisation costs due to eradication of smallpox, a victory for preventive medicine which the offensive against polio is seeking to emulate.

The last-ditch efforts to eliminate polio will focus on some 50 countries, although 10 countries account for the lion's share of cases that have sur-

vived the international campaign against the disease.

WHO divides them into "countries at war" like Afghanistan, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan, and "reservoirs where transmission is particularly intense," such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Brundtland said "we have a window of opportunity to eradicate polio forever. We are seizing that opportunity and accelerating the campaign in the

Clinton's singer brother performs at inter-Korean concert

SEOUL, Dec 5: The singer brother of US President Bill Clinton and his rock-jazz band performed today at a rare pop concert held in Communist North Korea by entertainers from the two Koreas, organisers said.

The 90-minute concert involved some 40 South and North Korean entertainers as well as Roger Clinton, a Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) official told AFP.

South Korean entertainers brought by SBS to the landmark pop concert in Pyongyang included two young groups specialising in modern US dance music. Details on the concert were not given.

Roger Clinton enjoyed a concert staged by North Korea's state symphony orchestra on Friday, one day after their arrival, according to North Korea's state media monitored in Seoul.

Wahid to ask 3 ministers to resign or face trial

JAKARTA, Dec 5: Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid said he would ask three ministers suspected of involvement in corruption to resign or face trial, reports says AFP.

"As soon as I get the information from Marzuki (Darusman), the attorney general, I will summon them (and ask them): 'Will you resign or not? I have the evidence,'" Wahid was quoted by the Media Indonesia newspaper as saying.

The president said the three, whom he did not name, should quit if they did not wish to be brought to trial.

"It's easy to find an excuse (for resigning)," he said.

Wahid had earlier said three ministers were being investigated over their alleged involvement in corruption.

November 26 Wahid announced the resignation of Minister for People's Welfare Hamzah Haz amid allegations he was involved in a 13 billion rupiah (1.8 million dollars) corruption scandal.

But the president denied the move was related to the accusations of corruption against Haz, saying he had resigned to devote himself to being the chairman of his United Development Party.

Postponed

The prize distribution ceremony of Red Crescent Lottery '99, scheduled for tomorrow, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances, reports UNB.

A fresh timetable will be announced later on, a Bangladesh Red Crescent Society press release said.

Pakistan prepares to safeguard N-installations against Y2K bug

ISLAMABAD, Dec 5: Pakistan has taken necessary steps to safeguard its nuclear and strategic installations against the Y2K computer bug, an official report said today, says AFP.

Pakistani authorities responsible for its nuclear facilities are "cognisant of the Y2K problem," a foreign office spokesman quoted by the state-run APP news agency said.

"Consequently, requisite steps have already been taken to safeguard our strategic forces and nuclear installations against any occurrences which may be caused by Y2K breakdowns," he said.

The Y2K computer problem, or millennium bug, stems from a programming short cut, which means some computers may interpret the year 2000 as 1900.

Pakistan became the newest member of nuclear states when it carried out a series of tests in May last year in response to nuclear detonations by rival neighbour India.

The country also has a nuclear power station at Karachi, producing 137 megawatts of electricity while a Chinese-aided 300-megawatt power project is to be commissioned soon at Chashma in central Punjab province.

Thais celebrate king's 72nd birthday

BANGKOK, Dec 5: Thailand today celebrated the auspicious 72nd birthday of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the world's longest serving monarch, reports AFP.

Surrounded by members of his family, the king addressed a gathering of politicians, military leaders judges and diplomats, calling on Thais to preserve community links in a rapidly changing world.

"All together, today makes me think of one virtue -- friendship -- which unites the country," he said from the balcony of a palace in central Bangkok.

"If you all have this virtue we can be confident that we will preserve our nation," said the king, who was garbed in a long golden coat.

Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, the king's heir, praised his father as the "centre of the nation who always works to bring happiness."

The royal audience was the culmination of a year of special events to mark the birthday which Thais view as auspicious, as the king is entering the seventh 12 year cycle of life.

King Bhumibol has been on the throne for 53 years and has shepherded the country through successive eras of political and economic volatility.

Guard dies as Lanka train fails brake

COLOMBO, Dec 5: Attempts to derail a runaway cargo train in central Sri Lanka resulted in the death of the locomotive's head-guard, while 40 commuters in another train escaped with minor injuries, officials here said, reports AFP.

The train headed towards the capital Colombo from the mountainous Kandy region forcing the authorities to derail it to prevent tragedy, officials said.

"However, the attempt was not a total success and the engine with some compartments speeded down hill and ploughed into another commuter train injuring about 40 people," a railway spokesman said.

He said the head guard of the goods train died when his brake-wagon crashed against a hill side after being derailed.

Assassination fears grip Lanka ahead of polls

COLOMBO, Dec 5: Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her main rivals are on a Tamil Tiger hit-list drawn up ahead of this month's presidential elections, press reports and officials said here today, reports AFP.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), notorious for a string of deadly suicide bombings, is plotting to kill President Kumaratunga and her arch rival Ranil Wickremesinghe and their key aides, the Sunday Times said.

"Defence authorities have credible evidence that the LTTE leadership has detailed death squads for political assassinations," the Sunday Times said.

"Some are said to have infiltrated the city with unidentified newer weapons to ensure their missions do not fail."

The newspaper said several other key leaders of Kumaratunga's People's Alliance (PA) party as well as Wickremesinghe's opposition United National Party (UNP) were high on a hit-list of the LTTE.

Police officials here confirmed security had been stepped up for President Kumaratunga and Wickremesinghe ahead of the December 21 presidential election amid fears of violence.

The opposition leader is also assigned more personnel for his security in view of these reports," a police official here said adding that local police were being deployed to protect campaign meetings.

The state-run Sunday Observer said the LTTE may switch from using suicide bombers to planting explosives at strategic places to target election meetings.

"The LTTE has brought explosives experts with special terrorist training from the West to execute the deadly task during the election campaign," the Sunday Observer said.

Iraq warns France of high price to pay for UN vote

BAGHDAD, Dec 5: An official Iraqi newspaper warned France today of a high price to pay if it sides with the United States in a UN Security Council vote linking a suspension of sanctions to a new disarmament regime, reports AFP.

Such a vote would be "the last straw for Iraqi-French relations," said Babel, a daily run by President Saddam Hussein's elder son, Uday.

As a result it would be "only logical for the French (oil) companies Elf and Total to close their offices in Baghdad and lose the immense concessions which they have won but not yet exploited."

The numerous advantages which French companies enjoy on the Iraqi market could also be halted," Babel said, protesting that Iraqis had "suffered a lot because of the position adopted by the French government."

Iraq has rejected in advance a British draft resolution at the Security Council that makes a suspension of sanctions conditional on Iraqi cooperation with a new arms control panel.

US State Department spokesman James Rubin said

Police said they made more than a dozen arrests following an aborted rebel bid to blast two electricity transformers in the capital last month to coincide with a guerrilla remembrance week.

Moderate Tamil legislator Neelan Thiruchelvam was assassinated here in the capital Colombo on July 29 by a suspected suicide bomber of the LTTE's elite Black Tiger unit.

Since a Tiger rebel known as Captain Miller drove an explosives-laden truck into an army camp and killed nearly 40 troops on July 5, 1987, the list of LTTE suicide attacks has grown steadily.

More and more high profile victims have been claimed by Black Tigers.

For Tiger supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran, the suicide cadres are a valuable shield.

"Black Tigers are the self protective armour of our race," Prabhakaran said in a message to mark a previous anniversary of their first suicide attack.

"They are the men of flame who can destroy the enemy's armed strength by their brain strength."

Military commanders say most of the major attacks against army bases in the island's northeast are led by waves of suicide cadres. The Tigers claimed their biggest success by overrunning 10 military bases last month in an operation code-named "unceasing waves III".

Sections of a highway near President Kumaratunga's tightly-guarded Temple Trees home are sealed off to traffic to prevent a drive-by vehicle bomb attack.

The cult of suicide is held in high veneration within the LTTE, and members of the organisation boast it is a privilege to be chosen to undertake a suicide mission.

Saturday that a vote on the res...

The Security Council has been divided on Iraq policy since an air war waged in December 1998 by the United States and Britain, which take a hard line against sanctions.

But a senior US official at the United Nations said Friday that the resolution would finally be voted on within the next week.

The United States backs the British draft, while France has not announced its position but played a role in enhancing a UN humanitarian programme under the resolution.

After having accused Paris at length over several days of abandoning its circle of "friends," Baghdad is counting on Moscow, which has multi-billion dollar interests tied up in Iraq, to block the resolution.

Sanctions have been in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Baghdad insists its weapons of mass destruction have been eliminated and that the time has come for a full and unconditional lifting of sanctions.

Election a wake-up call for Malaysia's ruling party

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 5: The loss of support for Malaysia's ruling party in general elections was a "wake-up call" for it to change its attitude, a minister said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Education Minister Najib Tun Razak told the Malay-language Utusan Mingguan that Monday's polls "showed an erosion of Malay support" for the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in nearly all areas.

"The results of the general election is shocking, but it is an appropriate wake-up call for the party," he said.

The National Front won 148 out of 193 parliamentary seats but its percentage of the vote fell to 56.5 percent from 65 percent previously.

UMNO, the backbone of the coalition, won 72 seats compared to 83 in 1995 polls, while its seats in 11 state assemblies shrank to 175 from 231.

Most of the losses were at the hands of the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), which retained the northeastern state of Kelantan. It has ruled since 1990 as well as capturing neighbouring Terengganu.

Najib, who is one of UMNO's three vice-presidents, said there had been early signs of weaknesses after PAS won Kelantan in 1990.

"Unfortunately, we failed to

take any action because of this image and aura that UMNO and the National Front is invincible, that it cannot be defeated, that it is a strong party that will always win," he said.

"That image is stuck in our minds and we believed it. We must change this attitude and culture in UMNO. We must realise that it is not impossible for UMNO to be defeated."

Although many Malays opted for the opposition, Najib said it was "not a vote for PAS but a vote of Malay protest against UMNO."

But he said UMNO would not go the way of PAS which aims to make Malaysia an Islamic state, adding that the ruling party's "basic principles" would be maintained.