

What's on today.....

Annual general meeting: The 22nd annual general meeting of the General Body of Assistance for Blind Children (ABC) will be held. Venue: ABC premises at Tajmahal Rd. Time: 11.00 am.

BCPS lecture: Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS) will hold two lectures on "Reproductive health in developing countries" and "Evaluation of a child with congenital heart disease". Venue: BCPS auditorium, Mohakhali. Time 11:00 am and 12:10 pm.

Inaugural: Henry's Heritage presents its two week long Eidul-fitr and winter fashion apparels designed by Shahrikh Shahid. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 3.00pm to 8.00 pm.

Fashion exhibition: An exhibition of fashion apparels by Avalon is going on. Venue: Cafeteria of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm.

Launching ceremony: The launching ceremony of Tj Honda Motor Cycle will be held. Chief guest: Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for Foreign Affairs. Venue: Winter Garden, Hotel Sheraton. Time: 3.45 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Dress exhibition: Rakha's creation begins its 3-day long dress exhibition. Venue: Gallery of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm.

Exhibition: Kay Kraft begins its 11-day long display of its Eid-ul-Fitr collection. Venue: Conference room of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm.

Weather

No change in temperature

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

No appreciable change in night temperature is expected over the country during the period, according to Met Office.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 29.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and lowest of 10 degrees at Sirimongal. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:17 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:38 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	26.0	67
Chittagong	28.0	79
Rajshahi	25.5	82
Khulna	28.6	82
Barisal	28.0	89
Sylhet	26.4	70
Cox's Bazar	29.4	66

HERE and THERE

Nari O Shishu Kalyan Parishad

Nari O Shishu Kalyan Parishad, a Mirpur Journalists' Housing-based Women's Organisation, has celebrated the Victory Day and launched a magazine 'Ankur' at a function in the city recently, reports BSS.

Presided over by parishad president Nurul Wara Begum, the function was addressed, among others, by journalists Syed Didar Bakht, Saleh Chowdhury, Syed Zafar, Syed Abdul Kahhar, Ziaul Huq, Mukarram Hossain, Akram Hossain Khan, Ataur Rahman, Mostafa Kamal Mazumder and Ashraf Ali.

President and general secretary of Journalists' Housing Cooperative Society Ruhul Amin Gazi and Abdul Awal Thakur also spoke.

The speakers paid tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War and praised the publication of Ankur.

Parishad General Secretary Rochi Habib, organising secretary Rehana Kamal, treasurer Shamim Ara and office-secretary Nilu Mazumder also spoke.

Daffodil Institute of Information Technology

The welcoming ceremony of the new students of the 11th batch of Daffodil Institute of Information Technology was held on Monday at its campus at 64/3, Lake Circus, Kalabagan, says a press release.

Md Sabur Khan, Managing Director of Daffodil Computers Ltd, welcome the new students on behalf of the institution. Md Nuruzzaman, training manager, teachers and officers of the institution were also present on the occasion.

FPAB discussion

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf yesterday called upon all to take a fresh view to build a self-reliant Bangladesh in the next millennium, reports BSS.

"We have to make the country self-reliant being inspired with the spirit of the War of Liberation," he told a discussion in the city.

Bangladesh Family Planning Association organised the discussion in the Shaheed Mozuddin auditorium on the occasion of the Victory Day.

Four daughters' murder case: Police submit chargesheet

MYMENSINGH, Dec 21: Police today submitted chargesheet to a court in the sensational murder of 4 minor daughters accusing mother Rashida Begum, reports UNB.

Rashida, who is in her late 20s, pleaded not guilty to the magistrate and said her husband, Abdul Khaleque, killed the daughters.

The police investigation officer in his charge sheet said Rashida of village Khodabuxpur under Iswarganj thana slaughtered her four daughters while they were asleep on the night of September 17, set the house on fire and fled when her husband Abdul Khaleque was away fishing in nearby river Brahmaputra.

Comrade Abdul Haque's death anniversary today

The fourth death anniversary of Comrade Abdul Haque will be observed today in a befitting manner, reports BSS.

On the occasion a national committee has been formed to observe the day. Elaborate programmes have also been chalked out to mark the day. The programmes include placing of wreaths at the graveyard of the late leader at 8 am today at Mirpur.

A remembrance meeting will be held at the Jatiya Press Club at 10 am.

The committee has requested all to attend the programmes on time.



The election of Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) began at the University Officers' Club yesterday. Active supporters of different panels eagerly await the arrival of voters there. — Star photo

Nasim arrives in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Dec 21: Home, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim arrived in New Delhi last night on a seven-day official visit to India, reports BSS.

The home minister, who is leading a four-member Bangladesh delegation, will call on Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L K Advani tomorrow.

He will attend delegation-level talks at the ministry of communications on December 23.

The minister will leave for Calcutta on December 25 to attend official programmes there.

Landless get khas lands in Barisal

MULADI, Barisal, Dec 21: Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah today handed over papers of khas lands among the 157 landless families of the thana under Barisal district, reports BSS.

Speaking on the occasion in the Thana Parishad auditorium here, the Chief Whip said the government of Sheikh Hasina is working relentlessly for the well-being of the down-trodden people of the country.

The government has established Employment Bank, introduced allowances for the elderly people and the women deserted by their husbands as part of its poverty alleviation programme," he said.

He said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the first who handed over khas lands to landless people of the country. "The government is implementing the programme to fulfill the dreams of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," he added.

Divisional Commissioner Yahia Molla, Awami League leader Mushfiqur Rahman, among others, spoke on the occasion with Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Alauddin in the chair.

Two students stabbed in Barisal

BARISAL, Dec 21: Two students of Barisal Government College were stabbed indiscriminately by their opponents on the campus today as sequel to quarrel, reports UNB.

Babu, 17, a student of first year, and the other yet to be identified, were admitted to the hospital. Their condition was stated to be critical.

Police said a group of armed students of the same class attacked Babu and his associate.

Sharif

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main evidence," he said. "They clearly have no evidence that the plane was not allowed to land."

The army has accused Sharif of trying to kill Musharraf by refusing to allow the plane to land while the aircraft ran dangerously low on fuel. When the aircraft eventually landed there was barely seven minutes of fuel remaining, according to court documents and the police case against Sharif.

During today's court hearing, Sharif's lawyers argued that a charge of treason can be filed only by either the federal or provincial governments and not by the military.

Justice Shabir Ahmed said he will decide on jurisdiction on January 12. Sharif will remain in jail.

The charges were filed more than one month ago with the police, which is the first step in Pakistan's lengthy legal process. The list of charges also has been submitted to the anti-terrorist court, but so far no formal charges have been filed.

Sharif has repeatedly maintained his innocence. His co-accused include his younger brother, Shahbaz, and several former senior officials in his government.

However, one former co-accused, Aminuddin Chowdhury, the Civil Aviation Authority chief, has agreed to testify against Sharif in exchange for amnesty.

His statement has been given to Sharif's lawyers and is to be presented in court when the hearing begins.

Sharif is to be tried in Pakistan's anti-terrorist courts, which were established by his government to hand out quick justice. Cases can often take years to run through the legal system. A case before the anti-terrorist court however has to be completed within seven days.

Y2K council reviews readiness in 9 sectors

The seventh meeting of the Y2K Advisory Council yesterday reviewed the preparedness for the millennium bug in nine sectors and found it satisfactory, reports UNB.

Science and Technology Secretary M Fazlur Rahman presided over the meeting. Preparations in all the sectors, including finance, energy and telecommunications, were discussed in the meeting.

The meeting expressed satisfaction over the contingency plans. Meanwhile, another meeting of Finance Ministry was held today that all banks and financial institutions of the country except House Building Finance Corporation are Y2K compliant.

The meeting took stock of reports of all the 52 government and private banks and financial institutions and found 51 ready to face the millennium bug. As the zero hour is ticking in,

the Y2K Emergency Cell's audit and review teams are going across the country to have third-party check to be confirmed whether the important installations are Y2K compliant.

A high-powered team, led by national Y2K coordinator and Bangladesh Computer Council executive director Dr Abdus Sohan, went to the port city Chittagong yesterday afternoon.

The team will have final check of computer systems and microchips of Chittagong Port, ships of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, Eastern Refinery, Urea Fertiliser Factory, Chittagong WASA and Raozan Thermal Power Station.

Another team will be visiting computerised branches of different banks in Rajshahi on December 23-24. The banks are Sonali, Agrani, Janata and Krishi, said a release of the Y2K Emergency Centre.

Jyoti Basu opens int'l trade fair

Tofail urges Indians to open market for Bangladesh

CALCUTTA, Dec 21: Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed today said that Bangladesh wanted to establish meaningful trade links with India, reports BSS.

"Bangladeshi exporters are increasingly interested to expand their trade links with India as they have the capacities to satisfy Indian consumers," he told a gathering of businessmen and renowned personalities of Calcutta.

Tofail, who was speaking at the opening of Indian Industrial Trade Fair here today, said Bangladesh has the ability to export a range of items to India. But due to some difficulties including absence of proper interactions, Bangladesh cannot export as per demand there, he opined.

West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu inaugurated the 20-day annual event.

Eighteen Bangladesh companies dealing in melamine, cosmetics, electric cables, juice, handicrafts, Jamdani sarees and artificial flowers are participating in the fair.

Tofail said: "Since we have succeeded in resolving many outstanding issues with India through discussions, we are hopeful the difficulties on trade issues will also be resolved soon."

He said both the countries have resources and there are complementarities in their economies which could be shared by both for mutual benefits.

Stressing the importance of trade fair to promote products

and expand market, the Bangladesh minister said such fairs also provide scope to both consumers and businessmen to be acquainted with goods and services of different established and reputed firms of various countries.

Tofail said Bangladesh, which began its foreign trade in 1972-73 with an export value of \$348 million has achieved export value \$5.32 billion in the last fiscal.

He said the government is playing supportive role for the private sector initiatives which has resulted in significant achievements. He illustrated the incentives given to the private sector.

Pointing to market access issues, Tofail said as an LDC Bangladesh is entitled to have duty-free market access to developed and developing countries.

"If we are allowed duty-free market access, our exports will enjoy both comparative and competitive advantages in the world market."

He said India has withdrawn some restrictions on import and reduced import tariff on the basis of bilateral discussions. He urged the Indian government to allow restriction-free import on duty-free basis to enable Bangladesh raise its export value to India, and reduce the trade imbalance.

In his inaugural address, Jyoti Basu underlined the need for regional and sub-regional cooperation among the South Asian nations for rapid economic development.



The explosive expert team of Bangladesh Army picked up a fake bomb from the Dhaka University Examination Hall No 4 yesterday that created a great sensation and panic on the entire university campus. In fact, it was a container of condensed milk filled with sands and pebbles. —Star photo

Five held with forged notes

BAGERHAT, Dec 21: Police arrested five people along with 45 forged notes of Tk 100 denomination from Harikhol Madhyapara area in Chitalmari thana on Monday, reports UNB.

On information, police raided the house of one Partim Pal at 9 am and arrested Gaus Biswas, Sheikh Mobarak Hossain and Shah Alam Sheikh with the counterfeit notes.

Acting on their confidential statements, police later caught two of their associates — Bidyut Das and Bikash — from a place in the town.

Shibir

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However, transport service to and from Chittagong was suspended as most of the vehicles except few rickshaws were off the roads and highways.

Railway sources said, train service to and from Chittagong was as usual. Delivery of goods from the Chittagong port remained suspended, but cargo handling was carried out inside the jetties, port sources said.

Shops and markets remained closed and attendance in both private and public offices was thin.

Shibir supporters held a rally at Anderkilla during hartal hours.

7 killed, 35 injured in road mishaps at Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Dec 21: Seven people were killed and 35 wounded in five separate road accidents in the district in 24 hours ending 6 pm today, reports UNB.

The deceased are housewife Baby, 25, day-labourer Amirul, 15, BDR jawan Asaduzzaman, 29, Mantaj Ali, 62, Khaled, 28, Shariful Islam, 25 and one unidentified young man.

Police and hospital sources said an unidentified pedestrian died on the spot on Jhenidah-Kushitia road at Shekhpura in Shailakupa thana at 9 am today when a microbus hit him from behind.

Cyclist Shariful Islam succumbed to his injuries at 12:30 am today at Moheshpur thana health complex.

A speedy microbus knocked him at Khalishpur on Kaliganj-Chudanga road on Monday. He

was rushed to the thana health complex in a critical condition.

In another accident, a day labourer Amirul died on the spot at Shekhpura on Jhenidah-Kushitia road on Monday.

A housewife, Baby, fell from the motor cycle of her husband Fazlur Rahman near the Cadet College, she was taken to Sadar Hospital in a critical condition where she succumbed to her injuries Monday night.

Mantaj Ali of Jessore, Khaled of Natore and BDR jawan Asaduzzaman were killed and 35 others were injured when a passenger bus hit a roadside tree at Dulalmondia in Kaliganj thana on Dhaka-Khulna highway as the driver lost control over the steering on Monday afternoon.

Separate cases were filed with the respective police stations.

DUTA polls results

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while Prof Fayez managed 470 votes.

Prof Anwar Hossain of Institute of Business Administration was elected vice president with 496 votes as White Panel nominee. Blue Panel candidate Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury of Management department got 458 votes.

Chairman of Economics department Prof Abu Ahmed was elected treasurer from White Panel with 500 votes while his Blue Panel rival Prof M Ashraf Uddin Chowdhury got 475 votes.

Ferdous Hossain of Political Science department was re-elected general secretary from White Panel beating his Blue Panel contender Prof M Anwar Hossain of Bio-Chemistry by 43 votes. Ferdous secured 503 votes while Anwar bagged 460.

Hasibur Rahman of Management department was elected joint secretary as Blue Panel candidate with 503 votes.

32 arrested in Feni

FENI, Dec 21: Police arrested 32 people from a different parts of the trouble-torn district on various charges in last one week, reports UNB.

Police said 10 of the arrested were wanted criminals while six detained in regular cases and 16 under article 54. They were sent to jail hajat.

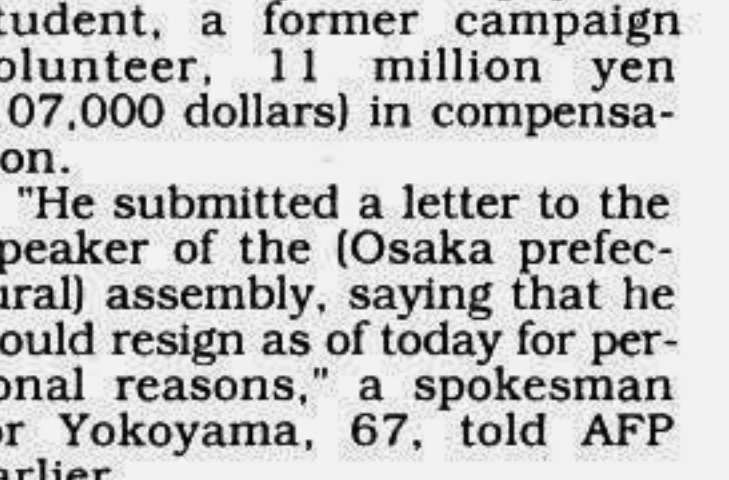
Governor of Osaka resigns over sex scandal

TOKYO, Dec 21: The comedian-turned-politician governor of Osaka, Japan's second biggest city, resigned today after becoming embroiled in the biggest sex scandal to hit the country in over 10 years, reports AFP.

The resignation of the governor, known by his stage-name Knock Yokoyama, came hours before prosecutors charged him with indecent assault after he was fined in a civil suit for sexually molesting a 21-year-old female student.

"The indictment has been brought against the governor," said a spokesman at the Osaka District Court, which last week ordered Yokoyama to pay the student a former campaign volunteer 11 million yen (107,000 dollars) in compensation.

"He submitted a letter to the Speaker of the (Osaka prefectural) assembly, saying that he would resign as of today for personal reasons," a spokesman for Yokoyama, 67, told AFP earlier.



Rescued 10

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garments factory in Dhaka city. She was trafficked by a woman eight years ago.

Traffickers promised a good job and took Bharati to India. She was rescued by Rajganj police, she said. Shohag said she was kept at a 'shelter home' at Hawrah for about four years after she was rescued from traffickers.

BNP explains

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Chowdhury wrote Monday to Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia urging her to return to parliament. The letter said the forthcoming session beginning on the first day of the new millennium bore a special significance.

Deputy opposition leader A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury is heading a team which is dealing with the reply to the Speaker's letter. The reply will be sent to the Speaker in a day or two, BNP sources said.

The draft of the BNP letter also gives the background to the party's boycott of parliament proceedings and speaks of the frustration caused by the ruling party's failure to address the issues.

"Unless our preconditions are met... the issues resolved, the question of our return to parliament does not arise," a BNP leader said last night.

BNP MPs, abstaining from parliament sessions since late June, are demanding an apology from the prime minister for her remarks about Khaleda. Sheikh Hasina spoke about Khaleda's academic records and the circumstances in which the latter was arrested in 1987 while campaigning against General Ershad.

The opposition party also wants the Awami League and its leaders to promise not to repeat such incidents in future.

The AL central working committee is meeting today mainly to discuss the issue of bringing the main opposition party back to parliament.

Death anniversary

The 6th death anniversary of Kohinor Banu, mother of Shaheed intellectual professor (Dr) Abul Kalam Azad will be observed today, says a press release.

A nilad mahfil and quran khawarij will be held at 2 pm at her son, editor of Daily Morning Post, Habibul Bashar's residence at 35/B, Rd No 7, Block G, Banani in observance of the day.

Families of martyred, injured FFs to get electricity, gas free of charge

The government has decided to provide 200-unit electricity and a gas connection up to two-burner oven free of charge to families of the martyred and injured freedom fighters every month to mitigate their hardship, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the proposal placed by Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry, an official announcement said yesterday.

It said families of all martyred freedom fighters and injured freedom fighters living under power and gas distribution network will get the facility from January, 2000. They will have to collect a certificate from Mukti Joddha Kalyan Trust apart from their personal identity for getting the facility.

The free distribution will be sponsored by Bangladesh Power Development Board, Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority, Dhaka Electric Supply Company and Rural Electrification Board and different gas distributing organisations like Titas, Jalalabad, Bakhrabad and western zone gas company.

The facility will also be applicable to the residential connection given in the name of the martyred freedom fighter's family chief or injured freedom fighters.

Caretaker PM of Italy asked to form govt

ROME, Dec 21: Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi on Monday formally asked caretaker Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema to form a new government after his frayed 14-month-old administration fell at the weekend in a coalition revolt, reports Reuters.

D'Alema, Italy's first ex-communist premier, accepted the task and said he would consult his allies immediately and hoped to have a new centre-left government as soon as possible, raising expectations a new cabinet could be sworn in as early as today.

D'Alema thanked his supporters and also those members of the Clover group of erstwhile allies whose call for a new centre-left leader sparked the crisis, making clear he wanted the widest possible support for his new government.

"I would like to thank the political forces that involve my name and also the political forces that had no prejudice to my name," D'Alema said after being given the mandate to form Italy's 57th government since World War Two.

"I want to help police nab the terrorists but I need to know first what police are doing inside my office," said Hanif.

The city Mayor said he is doing his best to stop terrorism inside his office. "Tender bids can be offered at any zonal office of DCC, which means the bidders have choice about places to drop their bids," he said.

Nagar Bhaban

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Asked why he reportedly freed some terrorists after they were arrested at the Nagar Bhaban last week on charge of firing, Hanif said he should know before police arrests anybody from his office. "When they (police) brought the handcuffed persons in front of me, I told them to release the persons and arrest them from outside my office premises," the Mayor said.

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The resolution requires UN member states to "deny permission for any aircraft to take off from or land in their territory if it is owned, leased or operated by or on behalf of the Taliban."

The UN believes the militant Islamic Taliban are sheltering the Saudi-born terrorist, who has been indicted in the US for the bombings of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last year.

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Holzman

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satisfaction at the working of democracy in Bangladesh.

President Shahabuddin thanked the Ambassador for his keen interest in the economic development of Bangladesh and expressed the hope that consensus on major political issues will be quite possible.

Donors had two important meetings with Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia on March 25 and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 4 when both explained their respective position.

Although donors were not much encouraged by the strident attitude of ruling Awami League and main opposition BNP, they kept the pressure on both sides.

The donors also sought appointment with the President, but the meeting could not take place as the Prime Minister in her remarks to BBC said there was no need for the President to get involved in political affairs.

Mobile security

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served seats for women have been elected unopposed in the CCC polls while election would be held for the posts of 47 commissioners including 11 for women.

He sought all-out cooperation from all political parties, candidates and their supporters, and all patriotic people in making the CCC polls a success.

The local administration and the law enforcing agencies would have to ensure