

What's on today....

Millennium prayer: March For Millennium will hold a "Millennium prayer". Venue: In front of Jatiya Press Club. Time: 12.01 am.
Prayer: Bangladesh Buddhist Federation will hold a special prayer to mark the new millennium. Venue: Dhaka International Boudha Bihar. Time: 5.00 am.
Competition: The prize distribution ceremony of the Kendrio Kanchi Kanchar Mela's painting and recitation competition for children, organised to mark Zainul Abedin and Jasimuddin's birth anniversaries, will be held. Venue: 37/A, Segun Bagicha. Time: 9.30 am.
Rally: Anti-terrorism Peace Movement will hold a rally. Venue: Ramna Batamul. Time: 10.00 am.
Dress exposition: The inaugural session of a dress exposition by Karnasubarna will be held. Venue: DRK gallery, House No 58, Rd 15/A, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.00 pm.
DRU Iftar: Dhaka Reporters Unity will hold an iftar party. Venue: DRU premises at 8/4A Topkhana Rd, Segun Bagicha.
Art exhibition: Amateur art students of Benuka Lalitkala Academy have organised an art exhibition titled "Welcome, New Millennium 2000." Chief guest: renowned TV artiste Alfar Hossain. Venue: House No 40 B, Road No 11, Dhanmondi. Time: 10 am to 8 pm.
Prayer: World Peace Organisation will hold a peace prayer meeting. Venue: In front of Jatiya Press Club. Time: 8.30 am.
Meeting: A meeting of Prof Akhter Imam Reception Committee will be held. Venue: Planning and Development Academy, Nilkhet. Time: 10.30 am.
Cultural show: Communist Party Bangladesh (CPB) will hold a cultural show to welcome the new millennium. The participants will bring out a red flag procession at the end of the show. Venue: Muktagong. Time: 11.00 am.

..... and tomorrow

BIBM Job Fair '99: Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) will inaugurate Job Fair '99 for the 2nd batch students of Masters in Bank Management (MBM) programme. Venue: BIBM Bhaban, Plot No 4, Main Rd No 1, Mirpur-2. Time: 9.30 am.

Weather

Dry weather is likely to continue over the country and light fog may appear over Rajshahi division in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.
Slight fall in night temperature is expected over Rajshahi division and may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country. Met office said.
Yesterday's highest temperature of 27 degree Celsius was recorded at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 07.8 degrees at Srimongal.
The sun sets in the capital today at 5:23 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:42 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 Morning Evening
Dhaka 23.8 14.2 89 65
Chittagong 27.0 15.2 85 68
Rajshahi 22.0 12.3 91 89
Khulna 25.4 14.0 91 79
Barisal 26.0 12.5 88 84
Sylhet 26.5 13.5 73 67
Cox's Bazar 27.0 14.0 72 65

HERE and THERE

BRCS: The 27th Annual General Meeting of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) was held on Thursday in the auditorium of BA Siddiky Nursing School of the Holy Family Hospital with Kabir Hossain, acting chairman of the Society in the chair, reports BSS.
The members of the Managing Committee of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, representatives of its 64 units (districts), eight deputies of four city units and representatives of the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Planning and Defence attended the meeting.
The meeting reviewed the activities of the Red Crescent Society of the current year and chalked out an elaborate programme to gear up relief and other humanitarian activities in the new millennium.
Welcome: From page 1 residential halls and auditoriums were packed with happy-go people.
At TSC of the Dhaka University, hundreds gathered for the new year's eve celebrations since evening, where crackers and fireworks and concerts highlighted the celebrations.
In Gulshan, the restaurants and guest houses were packed with revellers who had gathered since evening for the great party.
SSFB: The annual general meeting of Shishu Shasthya Foundation Bangladesh (SSFB) was held yesterday at its central office at Mirpur in the city.
National Professor M R Khan presided over the AGM which was attended among others by members of the foundation, life members, patrons, professional and local elites.
Al Quds Committee Bangladesh: Al Quds Committee, Bangladesh held a discussion on "Liberation of Al Quds and Duties of Muslim Ummah," at the CIRPAD auditorium yesterday, says a press release.
The seminar was held under the chairmanship of Prof ANM Abdul Mannan Khan, convener of the committee.
Professor AK Azad Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, was the chief guest at the seminar while Mohammad Rezaei Noori, Iranian ambassador and Shata Zarab, Palestinian ambassador, were special guests.
Others who spoke at the seminar included Hafez Habibur Rahman, Prof Dr Anisuzzaman and Prof ANM Abdul Mannan Khan.
United Dance Group: By Staff Correspondent United Dance Group, an old Dhaka based cultural organisation, yesterday organised a discussion meeting for party at KM Bashir Primary School premises in Lalbagh.
Presided over by convener of the UDG Selim Ahmed, it was addressed, among others, by Directors of UDG Golam Hossain Mamun and Pannu Pavel Raz. Member secretary Azmiri Begum Chandra, Mir Ashraf Ali



A young girl holding a placard seeking unity among Bengalees for the trial of "all razzakars" prior to the procession brought out by the activists of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote in the city yesterday in protest of activities of the Anti-liberation forces. — Star photo

Campaign against anti-liberation forces Grand rally at Paltan Maidan tomorrow

Members of different progressive political parties along with intellectuals, cultural activists, professionals and students will throng the historic Paltan maidan in the capital at 2 pm tomorrow aiming to launch a countrywide campaign against anti-liberation forces and for a ban communal politics in the country, reports BSS.
All necessary preparations have been completed to hold the grand national rally. Progressive people from the rally will take a fresh vow to root out communal politics from the country and hold trial of the collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces in the new millennium, the rally organisers say.
The main objective of holding the rally under the banner of "Ekatturer Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Jatiya Samanaya Committee" is to free the country from the clutches of "Razzakars" (Collaborators) in the next millennium, convener of the committee Syed Hasan Imam told BSS yesterday.
"We are thinking of a collaborator free secular country to uphold the spirit of the country's war of liberation in the next millennium where the trial of the killers and collaborators of the 1971 will take place," Imam said.
He said a series of countrywide programmes will be announced against the collaborators from the grand rally tomorrow.
The day-long programmes, to be held at the compound of Christ Church, include prayers for all the departed souls and for peace for the whole world.

Christ Church to celebrate New Year's Day: The Christ Church in Chittagong has organised day-long programmes today to celebrate the New Year's Day, says a press release.
The church, now located at Jubilee Road, is also celebrating its 162nd anniversary and bidding goodbye to an eventful year, an evolutionary decade, and a revolutionising millennium.

Ctg Port Truck Owners' Assoc calls off strike: CHITTAGONG, Dec 31: Transportation of goods to and from Chittagong Port resumed this evening following the withdrawal of a strike enforced by Chittagong Port Truck Owners' Association, reports BSS.
Port sources said that the Port Truck Owners' Association called off the strike following a fruitful meeting held between the officials of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and leaders of the Masters' Stevedores' Association, clearing and forwarding agents and the truck owners association in the port board room with CPA Chairman Commodore Golam Rabbani in the chair.
The truck owners' association went on indefinite strike at the port from yesterday evening demanding cancellation of the permission given to a private cement company to carry their own transports.

Three get Janakantha awards: The Daily Janakantha, a Bangla newspaper, has awarded "Outstanding Personality and Genius Award 1999" to three distinguished personalities for their contribution to different fields, reports BSS.
The winners are renowned educationist Sardar Fazlul Karim, novelist Mahmudul Haq and freedom fighter Shahanara Parveen Shobha, currently a health worker at Banaripara in Barisal.
Sardar Fazlul Karim, also a former communist leader and member of the then provincial assembly, would receive Tk one lakh and a monthly allowance of Tk 5,000 until his death along with a gold medal and a crest.
The two other winners each would get Tk 25,000 and a monthly allowance of Taka 5,000 and a gold medal along with a crest.
In the absence of the distinguished personalities, their spouse would continue to receive Tk 3,000 every month. But if they do not have any earning children, they would get Taka 5,000 every month.
The awards would be handed over to the winners at a ceremony soon.

Obituary: By Staff Correspondent Dr Muhammad Israil Khan (Bachchu), youngest son of late Tayebullah Khan of Chunaty Deputy Bari, Lohagara, Chittagong, died of cancer at the Dhaka Cantonment residence of his daughter yesterday. He was 83.
Late Israil Khan was a former director of the Animal Husbandry and Research Institute at Rammala, Comilla. He completed his MS in microbiology from the University of Minnesota in 1957. A devoted researcher, he was the inventor of the vaccine for the Rani Khet disease. He retired from government service in 1974.
He left behind two sons, four daughters and a host of relatives and admirers.
He was a brother-in-law of late poet Begum Sufia Kamal.
He was buried at the Jannatul-Mawa graveyard at Mirpur after Magrib prayers yesterday.
His quirkiness will be held at his residence at House-4, Road-9, Section-6, Mirpur on January 3 after Asr prayers.

Plane hijack: From page 1 fold last weekend, climbed down steps under the cockpit and drove into this city in southern Afghanistan in a deal overseen personally by Singh.
He arrived from New Delhi in a special aircraft also thought to be carrying three Muslim militants whose release was enough to satisfy the hijackers, who are thought to be Kashmiri Muslim militants.
Soon after the hijackers left Kandahar airport, steps were pushed to the main door of the Airbus A300, which was seized at gunpoint on a short flight from Nepal one week ago.
The passengers walked down the steps to waiting vehicles and were then driven to the airport which brought their Indian negotiators across South Asia to Kandahar, the spiritual capital of the Taleban movement, on Monday.
Taleban officials said the hostages looked weak, weary and exhausted after being cooped up inside the aircraft for the entire duration of their ordeal.
It is now believed there were 155 hostages and five hijackers. Earlier reports said there might have been 154 hostages and six hijackers.
The passengers walked into the welcoming arms of dozens of Indian officials and representatives of the Taleban movement as well as members of the United Nations and diplomats.
They were then taken to the Indian delegation aircraft and would be flown directly home, one Indian official said.

Hartal: From page 12 Meanwhile, Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury has been re-elected unopposed as other candidates withdrew their candidature. Now the polls will be held only for the ward commissioners.
The liaison committee meeting said the seven-hour hartal is called to support the resistance built by the people of Chittagong. The people would intensify the current movement and give a befitting reply to the government as it has resorted to a reign of terror in the name of CCC polls, it hoped.
The meeting was attended by BNP leader Anwar Zahid, JP leaders ABM Golam Mostafa, Mostafa Jamal Haider and Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Jamaat leaders Abdul Qader Mollah and ATM Fazlul Haq Amin, Masud Khan and Muslehuddin Abu Bakar.
Meanwhile, a joint meeting of BNP's national executive committee, front organisations and its city committee yesterday decided to make the January 3 hartal a success. BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan presided over the meeting at 29 Minto Road. The meeting protested the arrest of city BNP leader and DCC ward commissioner Chowdhury Alam and demanded his immediate release.
BNP leaders Abdullah Al Noman, Selma Rahman, Begum Ahsanullah, Mahbubul Alam Tara, Amanullah Aman MP, Shamsuzzaman Dudu MP, Barkatullah Bhulu MP, Abdus Salam, Miraj (Retd) Abdul Mannan, Sarajul Islam Selim, Kabir Mammad and Naim Jahangir attended the meeting.

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The awards would be handed over to the winners at a ceremony soon.

New Apex governor: The annual convention of Dist-2 of Apex Bangladesh was held at WVA auditorium recently, says a press release.
Apexian Mohammad Ebrahim was elected as District Governor, District-2 for the year 2000 at the convention. He is the past president and an active member of Apex Club of Mohammapur.

Computers to go rural in 2000

By Staff Correspondent
The new year will see computers go to rural Bangladesh.
The Department of Youth Development plans to set up computer training centres at the thana levels in the very first year of the new millennium.
At present there are 69 computer centres, but the department plans to expand it in all 450 thanas of the country. Besides it plans to expand its youth training centres from 21 districts to 64 districts, M Sirajul Islam, DG of the Department told The Daily Star.
The department is also planning to initiate a family-based employment programme for poverty alleviation of rural landless people, the DG said, adding that the programme will be undertaken in 50 selected thanas at the beginning.
The programme of the department is unique because it has developed over the years, irrespective of the parties that came to power, acknowledged the present DG M Sirajul Islam and also the former DG Fazlul Huq, who is now the additional secretary at the commerce ministry.
The micro-credit programme of the department totals nearly Tk 350 crore officials said adding that the recovery rate of the loan is about 95 per cent and that the department does not have any 'bad loan'.
The Department of Youth Development has so far imparted training to about 5.5 lakh youngsters under its youth training and self employment project, according to official sources.
The idea of youth development was conceived in 1973 and special allocation was made for some projects, sources said, adding, the department was finally ready to go into action in 1981.
The programme suffered a little set back in the subsequent years but picked up again from 1991.
The programme was taken up to thana levels during the early 90s. The BNP government expanded the department's programme upto 21 thanas some years ago, adding the remaining thanas of the country were linked under the department's programme by the present Awami League government.
The thrust of the department is to organise the youth, motivate them, provide them skill-training and help them with micro credit and then supervise the whole operation very closely, source said.
This, in return, has generated a skilled self-employed youth who is highly motivated for his own development and development of the family and the society.

Yeltsin goes

From page 1
I could," he added.
The Russian stock market jumped to a 15-month high on the news, with dealers saying the hopes of strong new leadership after Yeltsin would boost the economy.
Yeltsin turned over to Putin the nuclear suitcase, which contains the codes to launch nuclear weapons. Yeltsin also gave Putin medals symbolizing his presidential status and his presidential pen, while Russia's Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II looked on.
Yeltsin then left for his country residence outside Moscow, and Putin convened an emergency Cabinet session. The Kremlin said, Yeltsin still plans to travel to Bethlehem next month for Orthodox Christmas celebrations.
"The Yeltsin party of power has fallen," said Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, who came in second in 1996 presidential elections. He called on his supporters to rally for a Communist presidential candidate.
Under the Russian constitution, presidential elections must be held within 90 days of the president's resignation. The ITAR-Tass news agency said the presidential elections would be held around March 27.
Putin, with effective control of the government, including state media, has a huge advantage in the race to succeed Yeltsin.
Yeltsin, who has been hit by corruption allegations in recent months, reportedly had been looking for assurances from the safety of himself and his family when he steps down. Putin as president would be able to give Yeltsin the immunity he reportedly wants.
Plagued for years by heart and other health problems, Yeltsin was often ill and out of sight during his second term. He spent many weeks sidelined at his country residence and was largely seen as a caretaker president.
But Yeltsin continued to dominate Russian politics, despite his ill health. He easily defeated a Communist-led effort in May to impeach him and had dismissed four prime ministers in the last two years.

8 Sylhet JCD activists arrested

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Dec 31: Police arrested eight activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal from Electric area of the town last night.
A police official said they were arrested on charge of their alleged involvement in the armed clash with police and BDR on December 28.
A madrasah student was shot dead in BDR firing during the encounter.
The arrested are, Wahidul Islam, Nure Alam Siddiquee, Md Abdul Munim Badrul, Suman Ahmed, Imran Ahmed, Modabber Hossain, Babla Hossain alias Liton and Nahid alias Basit.
Sources said if there was a deal, the minister would have pocketed about Tk two crore.
Similarly, a Spanish company offered to provide 'tied loan' for building and equipping a specialised hospital in Khalishpur in Khulna, where the minister comes from. The proposal said all purchases had to be made from Spain.
To seal the deal, Yusuf even maneuvered to persuade the prime minister to lay the foundation stone of the hospital which was still in papers.
"This was in violation of government rules. The government accepts only grants but does not accept loans for hospitals. But the minister ordered that relevant documents be prepared in favour of the project," said one top health ministry official.
The proposal bounced back from the External Resources Division (ERD) unapproved despite a vigorous campaign by the minister. The World Bank also refused to accept the proposal as the hospital designs lacked the minimum details.
The suspension of 12 civil surgeons is a solid example of his corrupt practices. About Tk 20 crore was spent without approval of the authorities. Who gave the civil surgeons the flexibility to spend such an amount of money without prior permission was the question many asked.

Tension mounts

From page 12
on election camps.
The Opposition alliance earlier announced a two-day 'curfew hartal' in the port city from Sunday to react the CCC polls, scheduled for Monday.
Administration sources said 10,000 policemen, 300 BDR and 150 army personnel will be deployed in the city tomorrow, two days ahead of polls to maintain law and order. The security forces have already arrived, sources said.
They also said that 80 patrol teams will be on duty around 343 election centres.
The panicky situation following frequent hartals have marred Eid shopping in the port city, market sources said.
The businessmen will hold a protest meeting at Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry office at noon tomorrow.
Hartals have created a congestion of ships at the port, sources said.

Quake

From page 12
took shelter in open places.
According to preliminary reports, at least 200 houses were damaged by the quake in Hoyanank, Shaplapur and Kalarma Chhara areas.
This was the 5th earthquake that rocked Cox's Bazar in last six months.
Meanwhile, Chittagong and its adjoining areas were also jolted with a mild tremor this morning.
The tremor, which shook the city and its adjacent areas, was hardly felt by the residents when it lasted only 16 seconds from 6:53 am, the lone seismic observatory centre said.
The epicentre of the earthquake was located at 146 km off the port city. The intensity of the quake could not be measured, the observatory sources added.

Number of Grameen phone subscribers doubled last year

By Staff Correspondent
The number of Grameen Phone's subscriber has doubled last year crossing 60,000 mark. The GP is now covering 21 districts and aims to cover the whole country by the year 2003.
This was disclosed by Mehboob Chowdhury, director sales and marketing of the GP, while exchanging views with the journalists at an iftar party in the city on Thursday.
Chowdhury hopes that by the end of 2000 they would be able to provide cellular phone services to as much as 1,24,000 subscribers.
Mehboob Chowdhury claimed that the GP had the largest and fastest growing cellular telephone network in Bangladesh. GP already has substantial coverage in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna division.
It has also partial coverage in Rajshahi division and aims to expand the network to Sylhet and Barisal division during the first quarter of this year.
Mehboob Chowdhury said the GP now shares 50 per cent of the total market share of the mobile telephone in the country. The GP has been operating through 200 base stations.
Infekhab Mahmud, marketing manager of the GP, was also present at the iftar.

One shot, six injured in bomb blasts

By Staff Correspondent
Extortionists fired on a person and exploded bombs, leaving three people injured, in separate incidents in the city yesterday.
In another incident, a bomb attack on a minibus left three people injured last night.
Mosharraf Hussain, 35, owner of Koushik rent-a-car service at Dholaipar, sustained bullet wound in his left leg when a gang of extortionists fired on him.
He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College at about 3:00 pm yesterday.
The gang attacked him as he refused their demand for allowing them to use a car for fun on the New Year's Eve, hospital sources said quoting the victim.
In the other incident, at least three people including one businessman sustained bomb injuries when extortionists exploded crackers.
A gang of extortionists came to the shop of Ali Hussain at Gopibagh and demanded Tk 15,000 from him. Being refused, the gang hurled bombs and set two passers-by identified as Chanchal and Roushan Ara were injured in the explosions.
None, however, was arrested in this connection till last night.

Yusuf

From page 12
Prof M Amanullah remained a silent spectator to all the events as he was hardly allowed to take any decisions in matters although he had been responsible for affairs of family planning wing of the ministry, they said.
He used as tools some key executives of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and a number of his 'well-wishers' in inviting any contract and making posting and recruitment.
The latest example of Yusuf's way of doing business came to surface when he called a meeting to discuss purchase of Hospital from a French company without a decision to float tender, sources said.
The local ANZ Grindlays Bank agreed to provide a loan of Tk 150 crore to finance the purchase provided the government stood guarantor. All except one stood against such an unfair purchase offer, one source said.
Sources said if there was a deal, the minister would have pocketed about Tk two crore.
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80 shanties gutted at Hazaribagh: At least 80 shanties were gutted in a fire at a slum on Hazaribagh, an upmarket area in the city yesterday, reports BSS.
Police and fire officials said the fire originated from the oven at a house at about 11:30 am and immediately engulfed the adjoining shanties.
Three fire fighting units rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after two hours.
No casualty was reported in the fire, police said.