

What's on today...

Seminar: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic (BIIS) and International Studies Association Bangladesh (ISAB) will jointly hold a seminar on "Bangladesh in the Security Council..."

Weather

Dry weather may continue

Prevailing dry weather is likely to continue over the country during the next 12 hours till 5 pm today, reports UNB. Fog may occur over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet division and the river basins elsewhere over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Y2K bug didn't roar after all Official monitoring over, but experts suggest caution

Although the globally trumpeted millennium bug fizzled out, country's Y2K Emergency Centre has cautioned all from using date-related computerised medical equipment, reports UNB. The caution came after USA-based International Y2K Cooperation Centre informed that Gambio AK100/AK200 Dialyser, used for renal dialysis, machines would give trouble as it can't read year 2000.

Assault of woman on DU campus More organisations condemn incident

Various socio-political and cultural organisations continued to condemn the sexual assault of a young woman at TSC on the Dhaka University campus during celebration of new millennium on Friday night. Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) in a statement yesterday, termed the incident 'barbaric' and expressed strong resentment over the incident that took place on the campus.

AL programmes on Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day

Ruling Awami League chalked out elaborate programmes to mark the homecoming day of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on January 10, reports UNB. Days' programmes include hoisting national and party flags at central AL office.

Bar Council team calls on new CJ

An 11-member delegation of Bangladesh Bar Council yesterday called on Chief Justice Latifur Rahman at his Minto Road residence last night, reports BSS. The delegation, led by Vice President of the Bar Council Barrister Amirul Islam, discussed issues relating to quick disposal of cases and vigilance of the courts.

Justice Rahman assured the Bar Council delegation of having regular meetings with the lawyers in this regard. The bar council leaders also appreciated the remarks of the Chief Justice that the judges of the Supreme Court are not only accountable to their conscience but also to the constitution and people as a whole.

Bangladeshi boy at White House Millennium celebration

It was a moment of glory for Bangladesh's wonder boy Mohammad Shakawat Ali Uday when he delivered his message for the new Millennium in presence of President Clinton, Hillary Clinton and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the White House Millennium Celebration held at the Ronald Reagan Building on Sunday afternoon, reports BSS from Washington. The 11-year-old Uday was selected for the event as one of the six children from around the world to speak their minds on the momentous occasion of welcoming the new millennium.

Pirates loot Tk 1.8 lakh from rice trader

NARSINGDI, Jan 3: Pirates looted Tk 1.8 lakh from a rice dealer on the river Meghna at Shahar Khola area under Raipura thana yesterday, reports BSS. Police said the pirates numbering 15 swooped on the dealer Abdul Barik of Raipura thana when he was going to Ashuganj rice market with the money to purchase rice.

346 held, 17 arms recovered

A total of 346 persons involved in different cases were arrested, 17 illegal firearms and three explosives recovered in a joint operation of forces during last two days, a police press release yesterday said, reports BSS. The joint operation conducted by police, BDR and Ansar continued all over the country including four metropolitan areas on January 2 till yesterday morning.

Obituary

Engineer Azzul Huq Chowdhury, general manager of Petro Bangla Gas Transmission and Distribution Co Ltd (GTCL) and chief executive of Paschimanchal Gas Project, died of cardiac arrest at the Suhrawardy Hospital in the city at 3 pm yesterday. He was 53, says a press release. Eldest son of a noted social worker of Sitakunda in Chittagong Dr Mujibul Huq Chowdhury, he is survived by his wife and a daughter.



Biman's Managing Director Air Commodore M Rafiqul Islam visiting the under-construction memorial at the Biman head office 'Balaka' premises on Sunday. The memorial is being built at a cost of about Tk 70 lakh in memory of the 28 Biman officers/employees who sacrificed their lives during Liberation War.

Khaleda blasts incidents of assault of woman

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has strongly condemned the incidents of assaulting and stripping of a number of women, including the housewife of a diplomat at Gulshan, Jatiya Sangsad Chatter and TSC areas in the city on the night December 31, reports UNB. In a statement yesterday she said: I was highly shocked and aggrieved to read the detailed reports in the daily newspapers about the rowdiness of a section of youths.

PM's principal secretary reappointed

Dr Syed Abdus Samad, Principal Secretary at the Prime Minister's office, has been reappointed to the same post for two years on contract in the latest shuffle in the administration, reports UNB. His contract appointment will take retrospective effect from December 23, 1999, said an official announcement yesterday about it and some other important appointments and postings.

Construction of Rupsha Bridge demanded

khulna, Jan 3: The Greater Khulna Development Coordination Committee (KDCC) announced a fresh agitation programme to press home its 18-point demand including construction of the Rupsha Bridge and development of the Mongla Port, reports UNB. KDCC demanded immediate construction of the Rupsha Bridge and solution to problems of the Mongla Port including dredging of the river.

Polls open in Croatia

ZAGREB, Jan 3: Polls opened in Croatia Monday in a general election expected to end the rule of the late president Franjo Tudjman's nationalist party in what is seen as a key step for the country's democratic development, reports AFP. The country's 6,502 polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. (12:00 BST) and will remain open for 12 hours, with the first results expected late Monday.

Scary Spice throws out hubby

LONDON, Jan 3: Spice girl Mel G and husband Jimmy Gulzar have split after a last-ditch attempt to save their marriage failed, the Daily Mail reported today, reports BSS. Mel G is known as Scary Spice in the all-girl group which became Britain's pop music sensations of the 1990s. The Daily Mail said the couple decided to spend Christmas together with their 10-month-old baby after admitting their tempestuous relationship was at its lowest ebb.

Inflation up in Turkey by 68.8 pc in 1999

ANKARA, Jan 3: Consumer prices in Turkey rose by 68.8 per cent in 1999 from a year ago, and wholesale prices climbed by 62.9 per cent in the same period, the state statistics institute said on Monday, reports AFP. Consumer prices rose 5.9 per cent in December from November and wholesale prices were up 6.8 per cent.

Kuwait arrests thirty-seven in Ramadan orgy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 3: Police have arrested 37 people at an orgy during the holy month of Ramadan in Kuwait, a newspaper reported Monday, reports AFP. The 26 men and 11 women were detained at dawn on January 3 at a farm at Fuis, 20 kilometres south of Kuwait City, al-Watan daily said.

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Russia can renounce democracy if Yeltsin's successors fail to uproot corruption: Clinton

WASHINGTON, Jan 3: President Bill Clinton hailed Boris Yeltsin as "the Father of Russian Democracy" in a rare personal tribute on Sunday but said Russia could renounce democracy if Yeltsin's successors fail to root out corruption, reports Reuters. Clinton praised the former Russian president in an unusual first person essay published by Time Magazine two days after Yeltsin stunned the world by announcing his resignation and handing power to his prime minister, Vladimir Putin.

In a piece entitled "remembering Yeltsin," Clinton recalled the Russian leader as a bluff, bold and pugnacious man who defied the Soviet system in which he rose to power and was determined to keep Russia on a democratic path.

10 dead, 500 left homeless in Brazil landslides

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 3: At least 10 people died and 500 were made homeless as torrential rains in Brazil's Rio state provoked mudslides, the Civil Defence authority said Monday, reports AFP. The area north of Rio de Janeiro was one of the places worst hit by the heavy rains that began late Sunday.

Criminal probe into Helmut Kohl opens

BONN, Jan 3: German authorities opened a criminal investigation Monday into former chancellor Helmut Kohl for alleged breach of trust with his Christian Democrats (CDU) by hiding party donations, Bonn prosecutor Bernd Koenig told AFP. The Bonn prosecutor's investigation will be running parallel with a parliamentary inquiry into Kohl over the secret party funding.

Plane hijack Released UK man can return to his country

LONDON, Jan 3: A British Islamic militant freed by India after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines passenger plane has the right to return to Britain if he wishes, the British Foreign Office said late Sunday. Some 160 people, held hostage by five hijackers, were released in Afghanistan a few hours before the New Year on the eighth day of the drama after India agreed to free from prison three Muslim Kashmiri militants.

Arafat to meet Clinton Jan 20

GAZA CITY, Jan 3: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will hold talks with US President Bill Clinton at the White House on January 20, Palestinian international cooperation minister Nabil Shaath told AFP on Monday. They will discuss the peace process and US-Palestinian relations, said Shaath, who will be among the delegation heading to Washington.

At least 11 rebels, two hostages dead after army takes Lebanese village

KFARHABU, Lebanon, Jan 3: At least 11 Sunni Muslim rebels and two of their women hostages were killed Monday when the Lebanese army seized the village of Kfarhabu in northern Lebanon, an AFP correspondent said. An official of the Lebanese civil defence said the two women had been "eliminated" by the rebels.

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"The single idea I heard Boris Yeltsin utter more than any other was that his country must never go back to a dictatorship of any kind, especially to the Communist system he so clearly detested," Clinton wrote.

Clinton, who met the Russian leader 19 times as president, said Yeltsin deserved most of the credit for the democratic and market-oriented Russia that rose from the "totalitarian monolith" of the Soviet Union, which collapsed in 1991.

"No one deserves a larger share of the credit for this transformation than Yeltsin himself," Clinton said. "For all his difficulties, he has been brave, visionary and forthright and he has earned the right to be called the Father of Russian Democracy."

But the US president suggested that Russia could reject democracy if its government fails to halt the corruption and crime that have flourished since the Soviet Union's demise.

"Unless that battle is joined and, over time, won, the democratic norms and the market economy that have been Yeltsin's prime focus can be undone," Clinton wrote.

"Russian citizens, like those of other democracies, need confidence that theirs really is a government of laws," he added. "Otherwise, they will turn to other leaders and perhaps even to other forms of government."

Clinton said that another piece of unfinished business that Yeltsin has left his successors was the brutal campaign against Moslem separatists in Chechnya that is championed by Putin, his hand-picked successor, and opposed by the West.

On Saturday, his first full day as acting president, Putin visited Chechnya and gave hunting knives to some of the Russian troops fighting against Chechen separatists in a conflict that has caused thousands of refugees to flee the embattled region.

"We have a profound and open disagreement with the Russian government not on its right to oppose violent Chechen rebels but on the treatment of refugees," Clinton said. "Russia has to find the right balance between the use of effective force and a decent respect for individual rights and international norms. In Chechnya, that balance has not yet been found."

Putin, a former spy who headed the successor agency to the KGB, is favoured to win the March 26 elections that will choose Russia's new president.

US National Security Adviser Sandy Berger told ABC Television's "This Week" programme on Sunday that Chechnya could become "an albatross around his neck in March," suggesting that mounting casualties could hurt Putin at the polls.

Clinton said despite their disagreement over Chechnya, the two countries had worked together to reduce their nuclear arsenals, had ceased targeting each other with nuclear weapons and had seen their troops serve side by side in the Balkans.

Sobh-e-Emruz quoted Hashemi as criticising "radicals of the 1980s who were now passing themselves off as progressives and reformists" and reportedly accused jailed former interior minister Abdollah Nuri, a leading reformist, of demagoguery.

The remarks by Hashemi, one of the most moderate figures on the Iranian political scene, have caused a huge row among reformists, who are trying to preserve a united front ahead of crucial elections in February.

Five major pro-Khatami papers have been closed down by the conservative courts this year, including Nuri's popular Khorad and the reformist Salam whose banning last July set off the worst unrest here since the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Another reform paper, Arya, was given a two-week ban in late December for allegedly publishing false information after complaints from a top security force.

But Salam reappeared in another form in December and Khatami's brother, who is also deputy health minister, launched a new daily on Sunday called Participation.

They were among eight hostages seized by the rebels when they holed up in the village. The fate of the other six -- one of them a man, and the others women and children -- is unknown.

Lebanese security services said the rebels killed included one of their leaders, Abdullah Hazim. Workers of the Lebanese Red Cross and civil defence removed the bodies with the help of troops as night fell, after the army's final assault on the village.

The death toll could well be heavier among the rebels," the first aid workers said.

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