

# The Daily Star

TOSHIBA AC

MADE IN JAPAN  
The Perfect Combination of Style and Performance

RANGS GROUP

BUY NOW... PAY LATER



**Whirlpool**  
HOME APPLIANCES  
USA  
Refrigerator  
Transcom Electronics Limited  
Authorized distributor in Bangladesh for Whirlpool Appliances, USA

VOL. X NO. 20 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

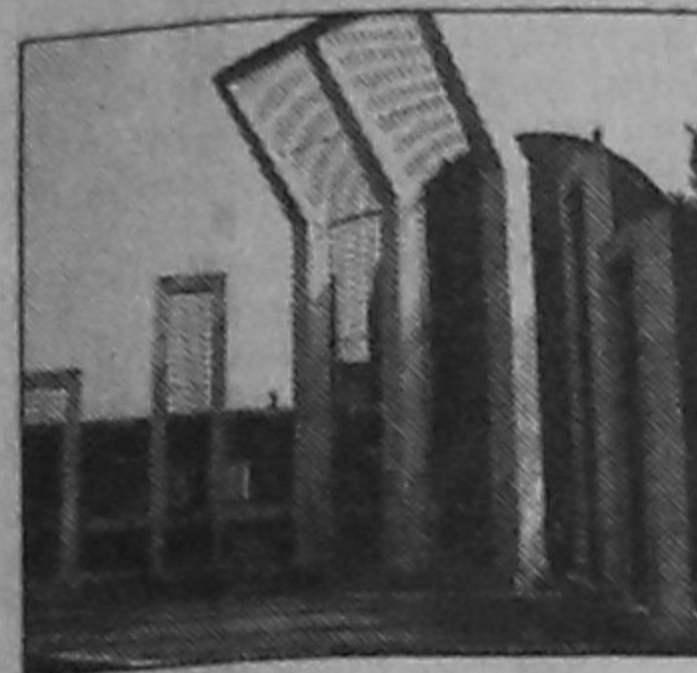
DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2000

3rd Millennium

MAGH 20, 1406 BS

SHAWAL 25, 1420 HIRI

16 PAGES PRICE: TAKA 6.00



## Amar Ekushey Book Fair begins

Water Resources Minister Abdul Razzak opened a book fair at Central Shaheed Minar yesterday as a mark of respect to the Language Movement martyrs, reports BSS.

The minister also laid wreaths at the Shaheed Minar under the sponsorship of Bangladesh Book Club and Jatiya Kabita Parishad.

Razzak paid tributes to the memory of the Language Movement martyrs of 1952 and said that the sons of the soil like Shaheed Barkat, Salam, Rafiq and Jabbar laid down lives to achieve the status for our mother tongue as state language.

He pointed out that historic Ekushey February has gained recognition as the International Mother Language Day under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Such recognition is yet another great victory for the Bangalee nation, he said.

Razzak described books as "the torch-bearer of knowledge" and said there was no alternative to book for the promotion of literature, culture and civilisation. He urged all concerned to develop a habit of reading books.

Organised by the Bangladesh Book Club, the opening function of the fair was presided over by Sheikh Akram Ali. It was also addressed, by Director General of National Museum, Shamsuzzaman Khan and Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka, Abdus Sattar Khan.

Later, a rally was brought out from the Shaheed Minar to Jatiya Press Club with the slogan, "strengthen the movement for reading books."

## Govt woos US-Irish bid for Block 9

### Tullow, Chevron-Texaco re-invited to second round negotiations

By Sharier Khan

The government has re-invited Irish oil company Tullow and American oil giants Chevron-Texaco to strike a joint venture deal on Block 9 under the Second Round Block Bidding, sources concerned said yesterday.

Representatives of Tullow and Chevron-Texaco may sit with government negotiators on February 17 with new proposals for partnership. Earlier the government repeatedly tried to mediate a partnership among the three companies but failed.

In a bid to rejuvenate the second round bidding process, the government has already invited US company Enron to re-start negotiations over blocks 3 and 6. Enron may start fresh negotiations in the last week of this month.

Besides, US company Pan-gaea has also been invited to re-start negotiations on block 8 on February 28.

All these companies had earlier slipped away from the second round bidding negotiations for various reasons.

The sources noted that the fresh moves were being taken in view of US President Bill Clinton's scheduled visit to Bangladesh next month. As part of the moves, Energy Secretary Towliq-e-Elahi Chowdhury would visit US next week.

Besides, a strong political lobby which had been backing Tullow from the very beginning of second round bidding is now considering that it is the right time to award Block 9 to the Irish company along with two American companies.

However, unlike in the past when the government had a clear-cut leaning towards Tullow and its proposals, this time it may ask Tullow to relax its

offerings. The main torch procession of the party was brought out from BNP central office at Naya Paltan.

JP held a rally at Mukhtangan and later brought out a torch procession with anti-government slogans.

Jamaat and IOJ organised separate rallies at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque and Purana Paltan mosque premises respectively.

Both the parties also brought out separate processions in support of the hartal.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Dr SA Samad and Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami are accompanying the PM.

Hasina is scheduled to deliver a lecture at Vrije University Brussels (VUB) today. She will also meet VUB academicians and Bangladeshi students at the university.

Ambassador Hugo Weets, Deputy Chief of Protocol, received the Prime Minister when a Biman flight carrying her reached Brussels National Airport at about 8:45 am (local time).

The Prime Minister was driven to Sheraton Hotel in a motorcade. Bangladeshi living in Belgium and nearby European countries greeted her at the gate of the hotel.

Ershad requested the President to take positive steps in overcoming the present political situation following the passage of the Public Safety Bill in the Jatiya Sangsad.

President Shahabuddin reminded his predecessor Ershad and his delegation of his constitutional bindings and limitations.

Ershad, who has been critical of President Shahabuddin Ahmed, apparently for the treatment meted out to him after his exit, led an eight-member delegation to Bangabhaban that had left a decade ago.

The JP delegation members referred to certain provisions of the tough law that they observed curtail court's power to grant bail.

The opposition liaison committee members who were

delivered to Alaska Airlines in 1992, Thom said.

The jet's crew had reported mechanical difficulties and asked to land at Los Angeles, said Ron Wilson, a spokesman for the San Francisco airport.

"Radar indicates it fell from 17,000 feet (5,100 metres) and then was lost from radar," Wilson told television network KRON in San Francisco.

The airline said the pilot reported having problems with the "stabiliser trim" shortly before the plane crashed.

On the MD-80 series airplanes, the horizontal stabiliser looks like a small wing mounted on top of the tail. The stabiliser, which includes panels that pitch the nose up and down, is brought into balance, or "trimmed," from the cockpit.

If a plane lost its horizontal stabiliser, it would have no means to keep the nose pointed

at the proper angle up or down, and the plane would begin an uncontrollable dive.

A source with close knowledge of the investigation, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the flight was normal and stable until the crew reported control problems. Radar showed the plane plunging toward the ocean shortly afterward.

Evans, the airline spokesman, said the aircraft had no previous stabiliser trim problems. He also said the plane was serviced on Sunday.

Alaska Airlines, which has a distinctive image of an Eskimo painted on the tails of its planes, has an excellent safety record. It serves more than 40 cities in Alaska, Canada, Mexico and five Western states.

The National Transportation Safety Board was assembled to investigate the crash.

## 36-hour hartal begins

By Staff Correspondent

The 36-hour nationwide hartal called by the BNP-led opposition alliance to protest passage of the repressive and black Public Safety law, will begin at 6 am today.

In support of the hartal, the BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote held separate rallies and brought out torch processions in all cities, district and thana headquarters yesterday.

In Dhaka, main opposition BNP organised rallies and brought out torch processions from the city's New Market, Khilgaon, Mohakhali, Badda, Farmgate, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Shampur, Uttara and Rampura areas.

The main torch procession of the party was brought out from BNP central office at Naya Paltan.

JP held a rally at Mukhtangan and later brought out a torch procession with anti-government slogans.

Jamaat and IOJ organised separate rallies at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque and Purana Paltan mosque premises respectively.

Both the parties also brought out separate processions in support of the hartal.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Dr SA Samad and Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami are accompanying the PM.

Hasina is scheduled to deliver a lecture at Vrije University Brussels (VUB) today. She will also meet VUB academicians and Bangladeshi students at the university.

Ambassador Hugo Weets, Deputy Chief of Protocol, received the Prime Minister when a Biman flight carrying her reached Brussels National Airport at about 8:45 am (local time).

The Prime Minister was driven to Sheraton Hotel in a motorcade. Bangladeshi living in Belgium and nearby European countries greeted her at the gate of the hotel.

Ershad requested the President to take positive steps in overcoming the present political situation following the passage of the Public Safety Bill in the Jatiya Sangsad.

President Shahabuddin reminded his predecessor Ershad and his delegation of his constitutional bindings and limitations.

Ershad, who has been critical of President Shahabuddin Ahmed, apparently for the treatment meted out to him after his exit, led an eight-member delegation to Bangabhaban that had left a decade ago.

The JP delegation members referred to certain provisions of the tough law that they observed curtail court's power to grant bail.

The opposition liaison committee members who were

## 'We'll scrap the black law, if voted to power'

### Khaleda tells newsmen

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP would repeal the just-passed Public Safety Act if voted to power, its chairperson Khaleda Zia pledged yesterday.

"We consider this repressive law as contrary to the Constitution, to the existing laws and to the fundamental human rights. If voted to power, we will first repeal this law," she said at a press conference yesterday afternoon at her 29 Minto Road official residence.

The BNP chief said that the people of the country would not accept the Act because it was a black law, hurriedly passed in the absence of the opposition legislators.

The United Nations in its anti-repression convention has adopted a decision that no member country will introduce such law which may curb people's fundamental rights, but this government went for the black law even after signing the convention on October 1998, she said.

The BNP chairperson claimed that the new law was more repressive and dangerous than the previously introduced Special Powers Act.

"Since the introduction of the one-party BKSAL system, the law was the worst in the country's history," she added.

She recalled that the party introduced the Special Powers Act on February 9, 1974 and brutally repressed the political opponents through abuse of power.

Since coming to power again, the party (Awami League) has unleashed a reign of terror on the people across the country through abuse of the SPA.

Citing example of blatant abuse of the SPA, Khaleda said the government arrested 10,700

people across the country only in 1999 and the jails are crammed with opposition leaders and activists.

She said that the Public Safety Act was introduced in addition to the SPA to intensify the government's repression on the opposition.

Khaleda who is also the leader of the opposition said this anti-human rights law would not only snatch away people's fundamental rights but also create a serious tension in the political arena and disrupt peace and stability.

The government in its last 44 months of rule has filed over 10,000 false cases against the leaders and activists of the BNP and other opposition parties, and jailed thousands of others, she pointed out.

The former prime minister apprehended that thousands of people would be harassed and sent to prison when the law took effect. She feared it would lead to deterioration of political situation.

"We think that harassment, repression and torture on political opponents and innocent people will increase manifold and public safety will be further disrupted. The law will be used as a political weapon when made effective," she said.

By introducing the black law when the whole nation was united in the one-point movement, the government actually displayed its autocratic attitude, Khaleda said.

She said the new law was introduced primarily to oppress the opposition activists, prevent them from getting bail, keep them in prison for an indefinite period and hold all elections, including the next

US President Bill Clinton will be visiting Bangladesh for a day on March 25, it was officially announced in Dhaka yesterday.

A spokesman of the foreign ministry told reporters yesterday afternoon that "at the invitation of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the President of the United States William Jefferson Clinton will be visiting Bangladesh on March 25."

"This will be the first ever visit of a US President to Bangladesh. The US president was looking forward to laying the groundwork for broadening and strengthening the relationship with Bangladesh during the trip."

A similar announcement was due to be made from the State Department in Washington about the impending visit of Clinton. The US president had expressed his desire to visit Bangladesh much earlier but later postponed the tour.

The foreign ministry spokesman said "at this point of time" he did not have any other details about the visit.

A report from New Delhi stated that the US President will pay a five-day official visit to India beginning on March 20.

At least 90 people were injured in pre-hartal violence in Feni, Rajshahi and Myrmensingh yesterday.

Our correspondent reported from Feni that at least 50 Jubo Dal and JCD leaders and activists were injured when a group of unidentified gunmen fired shots on a pro-hartal pro-

cession at Pangacla Road in the town at about 5 pm.

The procession was brought out by the youth and student fronts of BNP in support of the opposition-called 36-hour nationwide hartal demanding scrapping of the Public Safety Act.

At least four people were injured when two powerful bombs exploded at the city BNP office at Nur Ahmed Road this afternoon, police said.

The injured were identified as Parvez, 17, Solaiman, 18, Abdul Hakim, 22, and Kabir Ahmed, 23, police said. They are Jubo Dal activists, party sources said.

The injured were admitted to



## Clinton due on Mar 25

By Diplomatic Correspondent

US President Bill Clinton will be visiting Bangladesh for a day on March 25, it was officially announced in Dhaka yesterday.

A spokesman of the foreign ministry told reporters yesterday afternoon that "at the invitation of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the President of the United States William Jefferson Clinton will be visiting Bangladesh on March 25."

"This will be the first ever visit of a US President to Bangladesh. The US president was looking forward to laying the groundwork for broadening and strengthening the relationship with Bangladesh during the trip."

A similar announcement was due to be made from the State Department in Washington about the impending visit of Clinton. The US president had expressed his desire to visit Bangladesh much earlier but later postponed the tour.

The foreign ministry spokesman said "at this point of time" he did not have any other details about the visit.

A report from New Delhi stated that the US President will pay a five-day official visit to India beginning on March 20.

At least 90 people were injured in pre-hartal violence in Feni, Rajshahi and Myrmensingh yesterday.

Our correspondent reported from Feni that at least 50 Jubo Dal and JCD leaders and activists were injured when a group of unidentified gunmen fired shots on a pro-hartal pro-

cession at Pangacla Road in the town at about 5 pm.

The procession was brought out by the youth and student fronts of BNP in support of the opposition-called 36-hour nationwide hartal demanding scrapping of the Public Safety Act.

At least four people were injured when two powerful bombs exploded at the city BNP office at Nur Ahmed Road this afternoon, police said.

The injured were identified as Parvez, 17, Solaiman, 18, Abdul Hakim, 22, and Kabir Ahmed, 23, police said. They are Jubo Dal activists, party sources said.

The injured were admitted to



A rare rally members of the Bangladesh Book Club brought out a procession from the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday on the occasion of the National Book Day. — Star photo

## Autopsy on Afsana done

By Staff Correspondent

Autopsy of the body of Afsana Mosharrif, a relative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was done at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning amid tight security, hospital sources said.

The body was taken to the DMCH at around midnight Monday. After autopsy done by top forensic experts, the body was shifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) mortuary at about 11 yesterday.

Afsana, 48, was the mother-in-law of Samia Wajed Putul, the only daughter of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She was the wife of Mosharrif Hosain, President of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI).

Afsana was found dead at her first floor bedroom of her Uttara residence in the city late Monday afternoon.

Prof Shamsul Islam, Head of the Forensic Department at the DMCH and his assistant Dr KP Shaha who did the autopsy refused to talk about the autopsy report.

Dr Jalal Mohiuddin, general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association was also present at the morgue when the autopsy was done. He remained there till completion of the autopsy report, sources said.

Mosharrif Hossain filed an unnatural death case with Uttara police station on Monday. Afsana was mentally unbalanced for quite some time, police said quoting the FIR.

Mosharrif had returned home at about 2:00 pm after attending the Akherie Munajat at the Biswa Ijtema and found the door of Afsana's room closed. From the next room, he heard a gunshot just little before dusk. Mosharrif stated in the FIR.

## Refer Act to SC, Ershad urges President

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday advised the government and the opposition parties to resolve their current disputes through fruitful talks, reports UNB.

Fruitful talks and discussions among the political parties of both the Government and the Opposition would help in overcoming the situation," he said.

The President gave the advice when former president and Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad went to Bangabhaban to request him not to assent to the Public Safety Act bill.

Ershad requested the President to refer the Bill to the Supreme Court for its learned opinion about its nature.

This is the first ever meeting of deposed president Ershad with President Shahabuddin at Bangabhaban after he had handed over power to the then acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed, following the 1990 mass upsurge.

Ershad, who has been critical of President Shahabuddin Ahmed, apparently for the treatment meted out to him after his exit, led an eight-member delegation to Bangabhaban that had left a decade ago.

The JP delegation members referred to certain provisions of the tough law that they observed curtail court's power to grant bail.

The opposition liaison committee members who were

## Pre-hartal violence leaves 90 injured

By Staff Correspondent

At least 90 people were injured in pre-hartal violence in Feni, Rajshahi and Myrmensingh yesterday.

Our correspondent reported from Feni that at least 50 Jubo Dal and JCD leaders and activists were injured when a group of unidentified gunmen fired shots on a pro-hartal pro-

cession at Pangacla Road in the town at about 5 pm.

The procession was brought out by the youth and student fronts of BNP in support of the opposition-called 36-hour nationwide hartal demanding scrapping of the Public Safety Act.

At least four people were injured when two powerful bombs exploded at the city BNP office at Nur Ahmed Road this afternoon, police said.

The injured were identified as Parvez, 17, Solaiman, 18, Abdul Hakim, 22, and Kabir Ahmed, 23, police said. They are Jubo Dal activists, party sources said.

The injured were admitted to

## Bombs explode at Ctg BNP office: 4 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

At least four people were injured when two powerful bombs exploded at the city BNP office at Nur Ahmed Road this afternoon, police said.

The injured were identified as Parvez, 17, Solaiman, 18, Abdul Hakim, 22, and Kabir Ahmed, 23, police said. They are Jubo Dal activists, party sources said.

The injured were admitted to

At least 90 people were injured in pre-hartal violence in Feni, Rajshahi and Myrmensingh yesterday.

Our correspondent reported from Feni that at least 50 Jubo Dal and JCD leaders and activists were injured when a group of unidentified gunmen fired shots on a pro-hartal pro-

cession at Pangacla Road in the town at about 5 pm.

The procession was brought out by the youth and student fronts of BNP in support of the opposition-called 36-hour nationwide hartal demanding scrapping of the Public Safety Act.

At least four people were injured when two powerful bombs exploded at the city BNP office at Nur Ahmed Road this afternoon, police said.

The injured were admitted to

## Poetry Festival begins

By DU Correspondent

The 18th National Poetry Festival marking the Amar Ekushey February (Immortal February 21) began on the Dhaka University campus yesterday with slogan, "May poetry emerge victorious in the light of mother tongue."

Renowned poet Shamsur Rahman (inaugurated the two-day festival as chief guest at the Hakim Chatterjee near the University Central Library at 10 am. Organised by Jatiya Kabita Parishad, the inaugural function was chaired by its president poet Belal Chowdhury.

Water resources minister Abdul Razzak, youth, sports and cultural affairs minister Obaidul Quader and H B M Iqbal MP were present as special guests on the occasion.

Renowned poets of West Bengal Sunil Gangopadhyay, Samaresh Sen Gupta, Joydev Basu, Sebonti Ghose, Ratul Dev

At least 90 people were injured in pre-hartal violence in Feni, Rajshahi and Myrmensingh yesterday.

Our correspondent reported from Feni that at least 50 Jubo Dal and JCD leaders and activists were injured when a group of unidentified gunmen fired shots on a pro-hartal pro-

cession at Pangacla Road in the town at about 5 pm.

The procession was brought out by the youth and student fronts of BNP in support of the opposition-called 36-hour nationwide hartal demanding scrapping of the Public Safety Act.

At least four people were injured when two powerful bombs exploded at the city BNP office at Nur Ahmed Road this afternoon, police said.

## Inside Today

**Article**  
**The Middle East Conflict: Reaching Homestretch**  
Column: The Horizon  
This Week  
by Arshad-uz Zaman  
Page 4

**Focus**  
**Is Bangladesh a 'Soft State'?**  
Page 5

**Business**  
**JS body slays SEC over capital market slump**  
**Internet boom threatens to widen rich-poor gap**  
**DSE, CSE price quotations**  
Pages 6, 7 & 8

**Prayer Timings**

**February 2**

Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
Zohr	5-45	6-15
Asr	12-15	1-20
Maghrib	4-15	4-30
Esha	5-50	5-54
	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

**The Daily Star Anniversary Supplement**

The Daily Star will bring out a 40-page Special Supplement on February 9, 2000 to mark its entry into the Tenth Year of publication. The Supplement which is designed to focus on the first quarter of the new millennium will carry scholarly writings about the directions we need to take as well as reports of our own correspondents highlighting some positive trends in specific areas of national life.

The price of the 56-page Daily Star anniversary issue, inclusive of the normal 16-page spread-out, remains unchanged at Tk 6.00.

## US plane plunges into Pacific

### 65 passengers, 5 crew feared dead

OXNARD, California, Feb 1: An Alaska Airlines jet carrying at least 70 people plummeted into the Pacific Ocean after reporting mechanical problems. Several bodies were recovered from the chilly water, but there was no sign of survivors, reports AP.

Flight 261 was heading from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, to San Francisco and later to Seattle. It had been diverted to Los Angeles to attempt an emergency landing, the Federal Aviation Administration said. It crashed 40 miles (65 kilometres) northwest of the Los Angeles airport Monday.

A large field of debris rolled in big swells about eight miles (13 kilometres) offshore as aircraft and small boats converged on the site just before sunset. Hours later, the high-power lights of commercial squid boats illuminated the darkness

as a cutter and small boats continued the search.

Several bodies were found, Coast Guard Lt Chuck Diorio said, but he could not give a specific number.

"Every resource is out there to find people," said Coast Guard capt George Wright. "We're actively searching for survivors."

Cynthia Emery, Federal Aviation Administration flight operations officer in Seattle, said there were 65 passengers and five crew members on the flight. Alaska Airlines spokesman Jack Evans said there were 80 passengers and five crew members.