

● What's on today

Publication ceremony: The publication ceremony of a book "Learning NGOs and the Dynamics of Development Partnership" published by Dhaka Ahsan Mission in association with Coalition for Environment and Development, Finland and Vasudhava Kutumbakam — Lokayan (Global Responsibility Forum), India will be held, Venue: Conference hall of mission at House No 19, Rd No 12 (new), Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 3:30 pm.

Concert: The "Mind Blowing Concert" by The Attempted Band, Pearls, part of the Scenery, Lime Rain, Subconscious, Koprofilla will be held, Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 4:00 pm.

Annual certificate giving ceremony: The annual diploma certificate and essay competition certificate giving ceremony of Bangladeshi Insurance Academy will be held. Venue: Serai Restaurant, 65, Mohakhali C/A.

Publication ceremony: The publication ceremony of the "Sangrami Nari Juge Juge (Part One and Part Two) will be held. Organiser: Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha. Venue: Novera auditorium of the National Museum. Time: 4 pm.

Concert: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka has organised a "Mind Blowing Concert" by The Attempted Band, Pearls, "Part of the Scenery, Lime Rain, Subconscious, Koprofilla." Tickets are available at the Alliance reception. Venue: Alliance Francaise premises, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi. Time: 4 pm.

Symposium: A symposium on "Disease Vectors in Bangladesh and their Management," and the annual general meeting will be held as part of the 3-day twelfth national conference of the Zoological Society of Bangladesh. Venue: Auditorium of the Department of Zoology, Dhaka University. Time: 9:30 am and AGM at 2:30 pm.

● and tomorrow ●

Cardiology congress: The inaugural session of the first SAARC Congress of Cardiology will be held. Organiser: SAARC Cardiac Society. Chief guest: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 10 am.

Certificate award ceremony: British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dr David Carter will distribute certificates among the lawyers and trainers who took part in three separate training courses held under the auspices of Legal Education and Training Institute of Bangladesh Bar Council. Venue: Bangladesh Bar Council premises. Time: 1 pm.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Light rain is likely at one or two places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Comilla in next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met office said forecasting moderate fog at the river basins during the night and the morning.

It also predicted slight fall in night temperature over the country.

The country's highest temperature 29.0 degree Celsius was recorded today at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 11.2 degrees at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:54 pm and rises on Sunday 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		
Max	Min	Morning	Evening	
Dhaka	25.5	19.8	90	70
Chittagong	27.5	18.0	78	82
Rajshahi	25.1	15.0	85	72
Khulna	27.5	18.8	90	82
Barisal	26.2	19.2	95	82
Sylhet	25.6	16.5	89	73
Cox's Bazar	29.0	18.0	79	80

US warns of another military flare up across Taiwan Strait

China increasing forces

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: United States has warned of another military flare-up across the Taiwan Strait this year, reports PTI.

CIA Director George J Tenet told the Senate select committee on intelligence yesterday that the catalyst for these tensions would be the Taiwan election on March 18.

He said China would be monitoring for signs that a new president will retreat from current President Lee Teng-Hui's statement that Taiwan's relations with the mainland should be conducted under the fabric of state to state rather than One China — or further extend the political distance from reunification.

Although Beijing today still lacks the air and sealift capability to successfully invade Taiwan, said Tenet, China has been increasing the size and sophistication of its forces arrayed along the strait, most notably by deploying short-range ballistic missiles, and Beijing should receive the first two Russian-built destroyers later this month.

China is also likely to field

an integrated air defence system and modern command-and-control systems at the strategic and operational levels.

"In the coming year," said Tenet, "we expect to see an uncertain Chinese leadership launching the nation deeper into the uncharted waters while trying to retain tight grip political control."

"Thus far," he said, "Beijing's approach has largely succeeded. But the question remains open whether, in the long run, a market economy and an authoritarian regime can co-exist successfully."

Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Thomas R Wilson, testifying before the same committee, said by 2015, Chinese forces would be much better equipped, possessing more than a thousand theatre-range missiles, hundreds of fourth generation aircraft, thousands of 'late cold war equipment' tanks and artillery, a handful of advanced diesel and third generation nuclear submarines and some 20 or so new surface combatants.

China is also likely to field

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During the past year, the PLA has fielded several new ballistic missiles, agreed to purchase SU-30 flanker aircraft from Russia and taken delivery of the fourth Russian Kilo Submarine and additional indigenous submarines. China could field its first airborne early warning aircraft within the next year or so.

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Rose Festival begins in city

Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury yesterday formally inaugurated the "Rose Festival-2000" at the Sultan Kamal Women Sports' Complex in the city's Dhanmondi area, reports BSS.

Bangladesh National Rose Association has organised the festival to donate its proceeds to the National Blinds' Welfare Association (Jatiya Andha Kalyan Sangathan).

Inaugurating the festival, the Agriculture Minister said the rose is being cultivated commercially in the country that creates employment opportunity for educated unemployed youths.

She urged the concerned persons to expand the rose cultivation for its export and assured all-out cooperation from the government in this regard.

President of National Rose Association Prof Z M Tahmid Begum and Vice-President S A Khan also spoke on the occasion.

Later the minister went round different stalls of the exhibition and appreciated the show of different kinds of rose.

LDF, IOJ call for cancelling Clinton's visit

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) and Islami Oikya Jote yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over the forthcoming visit of US President Bill Clinton to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

In separate statements both the left and right-wing parties expressed their reaction almost in a similar language and called for cancelling the US president's scheduled one-day visit.

The LDF in its statement, issued after an emergency meeting of the Left Front Central Council, said this visit of the US President is not a general diplomatic tour nor a reflection of goodwill towards the people of Bangladesh, rather it aims at strengthening US power in South Asia and establishing an absolute command over the country's oil and gas resources.

The Left Front convenor Bimal Biswas presided over the meeting, while LDF leaders Nirmal Sen, A F M Mahbubul Haq, Rashed Khan Menon, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Abdus Salam, Dilip Barua took part in it.

The IOJ in its statement said, "The US president is making his visit to Bangladesh when the opposition parties are continuing anti-government movement. The visit the IOJ observed, would support the present government's weak foreign policy."

531 doctors demand scrapping of PSA

Disapproving of the Public Safety Act as another black law, a group of 531 doctors demanded its immediate scrapping as all socio-cultural and political organisations excepting the government party opposed it, reports UNB.

Motives behind the enactment of the most controversial law is only to oppress opposition leaders and workers, they said in a statement.

They think existing laws are enough to control law and order if used properly.

The signatories included Prof MA Majed, Prof M Nurunnabi, Prof ABH Bhuiyan, Prof MA Hadi, Prof Abdur Rashid, Prof MA Mannan, Prof Gazi Abdul Hoq, Prof Shamsuddin Siddiqui, Prof KA Zallil, Prof Ashraf Hossain, Prof Rezaul Karim, Dr Zahid Hossain, Reaz Ferdous Shibly, Kohilur Begum, Mosaddeq Hossain Biswas, Shuvash Chandra Shaha, Nahid Parveen, Sangeeta Bharatia and Minhal Karim.

598 arrested, 18 arms seized

A total of 598 persons were arrested and 18 illegal weapons, 103 rounds of bullet and seven explosives were seized during the 288th day of the country-wide combing operation by the police, Bangladesh Rifles and Ansar forces, reports BSS.

The combined forces arrested 475 persons of different charges from across the country including four metropolitan areas and seized the arms, ammunition and explosives. They also arrested 470 wanted accused and two alleged terrorists during the operation.

A total of 96 persons including five warrantees were arrested from Dhaka Metropolitan area and seized one illegal weapon, six bullets and two explosives while 73 persons including four wanted accused from Chittagong metropolitan area.

A total of 17 persons including six wanted accused and a wanted terrorist were arrested from Khulna metropolitan area while two persons from Rajshahi metropolitan area.

A total of 203 persons including 129 wanted accused were arrested from Dhaka range with six arms and three rounds of bullet while 177 persons including 111 wanted persons from Chittagong range with three weapons.

An autopsy report on Liton's body is yet to be received.

Liton was one of the three charged accused in Raju murder case filed with Sonadanga thana in June, 1998. Gunmen killed Liton on Tuesday afternoon after the court rejected his bail prayer.

His elder brother Tutul, also an activist of Juba League, was killed on the premises of City Awami League office in 1996, police said.

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern (left) and British Prime Minister Tony Blair at a press conference on Thursday after they held crisis talks at the Carlyon Bay hotel in St Austell, Cornwall on the future of Northern Ireland.



Barrister Najmul Huda speaking at a press conference organised by Bangladesh Manobadhan Sangathan (Bangladesh Human Rights Organisation) at the National Press Club yesterday.

— Star photo



Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB) held a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Hasina: Aid flow

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lucrative incentives for FDI, Hasina said the capital account has been liberalised, and foreign investors can own hundred per cent of investment and restriction on repatriation of profit and capital has been abolished.

Foreign investment enjoys preferential treatment with regard to customs duty for import of capital goods, she said, adding that tax sparing treaty with several countries reinforces the policy of income tax exemption for foreign investment.

The Prime Minister said the Bangladeshi people had rejected the opposition parties, particularly BNP that has become inglorious losing power.

"The people are with us," she told the meet. She said her party would continue its efforts to stabilise democracy and hoped that the people would continue their support to Awami League for institutionalising democracy.

Hasina to a question said empowerment of women is a major area of government's work, where the ruling party has achieved remarkable success. "Europe can look at this matter," she suggested.

About the interest of expatriate Bangladeshis, she said wherever she visited, she had taken up the matters of Bangladeshi labour with the respective governments. "It is a political commitment and responsibility of the ruling party to protect their interest."

Thus the problem has been created due to India-Pakistan tensions and the injury of the SAARC summit chairman, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga."

She hoped that the SAARC would continue its due role for the development of the region and for continued peace and progress of its around one and a quarter billion people.

About Bangladesh's view of world economy, she said Bangladesh recognises the importance of market-driven economy and thinks about the mobility of labour force alike the flow of capital and other resources.

She proposed that "labour mobility should be free and unhindered across the globe."

Reaffirming the government's commitment to reduce poverty, the Prime Minister placed stress on sustaining high growth rate to get out of the poverty trap.

"We recognise that high growth does not necessarily address poverty. We should continue to pursue policies and programmes which have significant impact on poverty alleviation."

She said a government could not act genuinely in the interest of the people without empowering the populace. "Only when the conditions for empowerment have been fulfilled, can the people voice their demands and make government recognise the importance of those demands."

Hasina said democracy provides the basis of the political system and institutional arrangement for people's empowerment as well as a responsive and accountable government.

Replying to queries from her European audience about political situation at home, Hasina blamed the agitating opposition parties for trying to capture power through extra-constitutional means.

She told them that the government had taken initiative to resolve political disputes through discussion and expected that the opposition would come back to democratic

Ministers, VCs condole death of BAU VC

Ministers and vice chancellors of various universities yesterday condole the death of Prof Muhammad Hussain, Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), reports BSS.

In their separate condolence messages, they expressed their deep sorrow at the sad demise of the Prof Hussain and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Foreign Minister and acting president of Bangladesh Awami League Abdus Samad Azad and Local Government Minister AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, condoling the death of Prof Hussain, said in his death the nation has lost a noted educationist and brilliant scientist.

They expressed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

In her message of condolence, Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury expressed grave shock at the death of Prof Hussain.