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Wishing the
BEST for the
3rd Millennium

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Support Dhaka's plan, President urges Clinton

President Shahabuddin Ahmed asked the United States to support Bangladesh's plan to improve the quality of life in an atmosphere of peace and prosperity, reports UNB.

"Bangladesh attaches great importance to its relationship with the United States ... Our people hold the people and the government of United States in great esteem for their commitment to freedom, democracy and dignity of human beings," he said at a banquet in honour of President Bill Clinton at the Bangabhaban last night.

Shahabuddin said Clinton's visit to Bangladesh was not only a testament to the friendly ties between the two nations but also a reflection of the unflinching commitment to democracy and the rule of law by Dhaka and Washington.

He said America is an indispensable participant in any effort to tackle global problems. "You have given America almost eight years of unprecedented growth and prosperity through your dynamic leadership," Shahabuddin said.

"You have given America a bold and decisive leadership, which has helped defuse tensions and reduce conflict world over."

He also admired his counterpart's genuine efforts to advance the cause of peace and stability throughout the world. "We recalled with gratitude the support and solidarity the

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Clinton meets Dr Yunus

By Special Correspondent

Bill Clinton met with Dr. Mohammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank and micro-credit, yesterday.

The meeting took place at the US Embassy, where Clinton also met with the women clients of the Grameen Bank from Joypura, a small village in Dhamrai, 35 kilometres north west of Dhaka.

The women came to meet Clinton after his visit to their village was cancelled for security reasons.

Clinton had a 40-minute meeting with his old friend Dr. Yunus and asked about the progress of his projects.

He also used the mobile phone of a woman from Joypura to place an international call.

Clinton said he was happy to see that the hi-tech mobile phone was being used by the simple village women under Grameen Phone programme in rural Bangladesh.

Our new numbers

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Mar	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
21	-	6:10pm
22	6:00 am	-

Prayer Timings

March 21

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:20	5:50
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Ast	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:15	6:20
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Khaleda also urged Clinton

to grant Bangladeshi nationals living in the U.S. residence status.

She discussed the violation of human rights, state of democracy, deterioration of law and order, repression of the opposition, the ineffectiveness of parliament, the collapse of administration, uncertainty in people-oriented programmes and the government's incompetence to complete economic, institutional and administrative reforms.

The leader of the opposition in parliament also briefed Clinton about the opposition's current movement for an early general election.

Khaleda said the opposition was forced to come out on the street as the ruling party refused to allow it to have a say on national issues, including the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty.

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Visit disrupts life in city

By Staff Correspondent

United States President Bill Clinton's visit to Dhaka disrupted transportation and business in Dhaka yesterday.

The roads Clinton travelled were restricted to VIPs and vehicles with special stickers for about 16 hours. Travel was also interrupted periodically in some areas where the restrictions were not enforced, said witnesses. The border was "virtually" closed due to the visit.

Security prevented pedestrians from entering certain areas, especially around the Sonargaon Hotel where Clinton was staying during his visit. Sidewalks and underpasses were also out of bounds. No announcement had been made about restrictions on pedestrians.

Police, BDR and army personnel were deployed at key points, including the roofs of

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and the maximum punishment for hijacking is death sentence."

Sharif and his colleagues are said to have prevented a Pakistan International Airlines plane returning army chief Gen Pervez Musharraf from landing in Karachi last Oct 12, the day the army took power in Pakistan.

The court shall award the maximum punishment for the offences alleged against the accused, chief public prosecutor Raja Qureshi told a Karachi anti-terrorism court.

Sharif and six other accused, including his brother Shahbaz, have been charged with hijacking, kidnapping, attempted murder and terrorism. All deny the charges. They face the death penalty if convicted of hijacking.

The antiterrorists court has the right to hand down a maximum sentence, said Qureshi

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Clinton leaves for Delhi

Ending about a 12-hour hectic mission in Dhaka yesterday, US President Bill Clinton left Dhaka at 9:52 pm, reports UNB.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saw him off at the VIP Tarmas of the Zia International Airport as he flew back to New Delhi.

A smiling Clinton waved to say goodbye to Bangladesh before he stepped into his Sea-20 jet, Air Force One.

The President was accompanied by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Secretary of Commerce William Da-

Bangladesh has very big future: Clinton

Ties with US growing: Hasina

By Diplomatic Correspondent

US President Bill Clinton yesterday termed Bangladesh as a nation with a "very big future".

"Political and economic factors encouraged me to come here. This is a nation that chose to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; a nation that has used its soldiers to go around the world to help others make peace; a nation that I believe is committed to democracy, with a vigorous level of political debate inside the country."

Clinton said his visit to Bangladesh marked the beginning of a new chapter in enlarging relations between the two democracies.

"Today is the beginning of a stronger partnership. The Prime Minister and I discussed ways to strengthen our economic ties, while ensuring that future prosperity is built upon respect for decent labour practices, the magnificent natural environment of Bangladesh, and a sense of responsibility toward the children who will inherit the future."

The US President made the remarks before foreign and local newsmen on the entrance steps of the International Conference Centre where a special podium was erected for him and

visit Bangladesh.

"But I am quite sure I will not be the last," he added with a note of optimism.

"Though far apart geographically, our nations grow closer every day—through expanding trade, through the Internet revolution, and through our shared interest in building a world more peaceful, more tolerant, more prosperous and more free."

Clinton announced that the US Agency for International Development and the Department of Agriculture would provide 97 million US dollars in food assistance to Bangladesh. The same department would extend another 50 million US dollars to Bangladesh and other nations to harness clean energy, he said.

Sheikh Hasina in her remarks said it is a matter of satisfaction that the ties between the two countries have grown substantially.

She spoke about her discussions with the US President prior to the press statement. Talks were held on bilateral trade with the US, our number one export market".

She said both the countries acknowledge the immense po-

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Clinton and Hasina at the joint press briefing at International Conference Centre following official talks yesterday. — Star photo

Implement liberal policies, remove red tapism

Daley's suggestion for increased US investment

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Business Council (USBBC) at Sheraton Hotel.

"We are Bangladesh's largest trading partner. It is not unusual that when an American wears baseball cap, or a t-shirt, it is made in Bangladesh. Despite this, America has a trade deficit with Bangladesh, as we do with most nations," the US Commerce Secretary said. "So quite frankly, one reason I am here is to see how we can do better on the export front, while supporting efforts to develop the local economy."

He also said Bangladesh should remove red tapism, make rules and laws transparent and seek more regional trade for a stronger economy.

He was speaking at a business conference on US-Bangladesh Economic Relations: Prospects and Challenges, organised jointly by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) and US-

say this in every country I go to, it does not make any sense to bring American companies in when you know they will create jobs in Bangladesh, and then turn the companies up in red tape. Or make them face uncertain rules and laws, or a lack of transparency.

He also hoped that Bangladesh should find ways to trade more with her neighbours. Broader regional cooperation on other fronts often follows trade, as South Asia is finding. And this can build a better future for everyone in South Asia, by bringing stability. It shows that countries that trade openly can benefit substantially.

To be frank with you, and I

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Security, or lack of it?

By Staff Correspondent

No reason was given either by the US or by the Bangladesh officials as to what prompted some major changes in the itinerary of President Bill Clinton's visit here.

The itinerary was kept under wraps by both the sides. Details were released by the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Internet site of the White House at whitehouse.gov several hours prior to the arrival of the US President.

A major change in the itinerary was made by dropping the visit to a Grameen Bank project and a BRAC school at Joypura. The CNN, quoting White House sources, said in its Sunday night bulletin that the programme was dropped.

It said that the visit to Joypura was cancelled because of security concerns raised by US Secret Service as they could not ensure security at the town (Joypura).

Officials of both BRAC and Grameen said they were informed only hours before the US President's arrival that the programme was cancelled with a request to 'replicate part of the programme on the US embassy premises.'

The visit to Savar National Memorial was also dropped for unknown reasons. No government official could give any reason for this. Everyone said the US President would be going there sometime later in the day.

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Clinton slated for not visiting Nat'l Mausoleum

By Staff Correspondent

Different socio-cultural and political organisations criticised US President Bill Clinton for not visiting the National Mausoleum at Savar during his tour.

The Committee for Eliminating Killers and Collaborators of '71 held a rally in protest against the decision.

Clinton was scheduled to pay tribute to the Liberation War martyrs, a tradition for visiting world leaders, but it was cancelled in the last minute due to "security reasons".

He is the first visiting head of state or government not to pay respect at the mausoleum.

Noted artist Hasem Khan chaired the rally held at the Teachers-Students Centre (TSC) at Dhaka University.

Terming the incident as an insult to the three million martyrs, speakers said by not visit-

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PSCs not signed

By Sharier Khan

Despite repeated attempts to sign two production sharing contracts with American oil companies in the telecommunication sector in presence of US Commerce Secretary William M Daley, sources said the contracts were signed yesterday.

Sources said the White House avoided the Energy Ministry's attempts to keep Clinton at the contract signing ceremony.

The government tried to sign the contracts when Clinton visited the Prime Minister's office in the morning. After the White House refused, the government tried again at different venues.

The last attempt was made at the Bangabhaban where Clinton attended a banquet hosted by President Shahabuddin Ahmed. When that attempt failed, the government postponed the ceremony.

Pangaea and Unocal executives remained on standby at the Petrocentre throughout the day. They were instructed to wait there on Sunday, since the White House refused to agree to the government's plan to sign

the contracts in front of Clinton.

"It would have been very unusual to have the U.S. president present on such an occasion," said an official. "It's a company to company affair and Bill Clinton commands a different stature. We've signed PSCs in the past and there is no instance of having such high profile leader present."

The two contracts were for the exploration of Block 8 and Block 9. Both contracts were "over-enthusiastically" initiated recently. The fate of the contract for Block 9, initiated by Tullow-Chevron-Texaco, has become uncertain, since Texaco asked for more time before it signed the final agreement. This contract was also supposed to be signed yesterday.

Sources said Texaco stated in a letter Sunday that Bangladesh's Law Ministry made some changes after the contract was initiated. Texaco

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