

What's on today

Film show: Zahir Raihan Film Society has organised a 'Retrospective of French filmmaker Robert Bresson' beginning today. Film: Diary of a Country Priest. Venue: Goethe Institut, Road 9, Dhanmondi. Time: 6 pm.

Inauguration: A photography by exhibition by renowned photographer Anwar Hossain will be inaugurated. Venue: Cafeteria of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 5:00 pm.

Founding anniversary: The 18th founding anniversary of Retired Armed Forces Officers' Welfare Association (RAOWA) will be held. Venue: RAOWA office premises on VIP road, DOHS, Mohakhali. Time: 7:30 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Film show: Two films will be screened as part of 'Retrospective of French filmmaker Robert Bresson', organised by Zahir Raihan Film Society. Films: A Man Escaped and Pickpocket. Venue: Goethe Institut, Road 9, Dhanmondi. Time: 6 pm and 7 pm.

Discussion: Muslim Nationalist Movement has organised a discussion session to mark the 60th anniversary of Historic Lahore Resolution-1940. Venue: VIP Lounge of National Press Club. Time: 3 pm.

Lecture: A memorial lecture on 'Social Awakening in Bangladesh during Twentieth Century: Some Aspects' will be held to mark 25th death anniversary of eminent journalist and letterateur Kazi Mohammad Idris. Keynote paper: Sham-suzaman Khan, Director General, Bangladesh National Museum. Venue: Poet Shafiq Kamal auditorium of National Museum. Time: 5:30 pm.

Weather

No change in temperature

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Chittagong division in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged during the period, the Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessore and the lowest 17.0 degree Celsius at Dinajpur and Teknaf.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:10 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:00 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	31.4	22.4	71	49
Chittagong	32.9	19.8	61	73
Rajshahi	32.8	18.2	82	40
Khulna	33.0	23.8	86	57
Barisal	33.6	22.5	92	66
Sylhet	31.2	19.9	67	60
Cox's Bazar	32.2	19.5	69	81

GEF to double funding for addressing water issues

THE HAGUE, Mar 20: The Global Environment Facility (GEF) announced today that it will double its funding for addressing global water and related land degradation issues, reports BSS.

The increase in GEF funding comes at a time when water and related land degradation are increasingly recognised as major barriers to global sustainable development.

GEF Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mohammed El-Ashry, warned that "unless action replaces rhetoric, the number of people experiencing water shortages and stress is projected to rise to 2.3 billion, representing more than a quarter of humanity." Most of these people will be the poor in the developing world, where degradation of watersheds is accelerating.

"Free water is wasted water," Dr El-Ashry said. "Governments must step up efforts to generate revenues and attract private investments for more efficient and equitable urban water, sanitation, and irrigation services. The GEF stands ready to assist countries in leveraging this support, but without better pricing policies, the large sums needed to reverse current degradation of water resources will not materialise."

With its focus on forging partnerships that simultaneously provide national, regional, and global benefits, the GEF is positioned to play a key role in addressing four central, inter-linked aspects of the water crisis.

Scarcity, Integrated Land and Water Resource Management, Conflict Prevention and Land-based Sources of Pollution.

In addition to more than 100 water-related projects in 131 nations, the GEF is also a major contributor to efforts which address the threat of biodiversity loss, climate change, ozone depletion, and land degradation.

Since its creation as a pilot in 1991, the GEF has allocated more than 2.5 billion US dollar for over 620 projects in 140 countries. This has been complemented by an additional 5 billion US dollar in co-financing from GEF partners, including recipient nations.

Sydney welcomes Queen Elizabeth

SYDNEY, Mar 20: On her first visit to Australia since a referendum last year retained her as head of state, Queen Elizabeth II was welcomed today on the steps of Sydney's landmark Opera House, reports AP.

A 21-gun salute rang out over Sydney's picturesque harbour as the queen, dressed in a lime-green coat with matching skirt and hat, was greeted by her representative, Governor-General Sir William Deane, and Prime Minister John Howard.

With heavy rain falling on a sticky, humid day, the queen held her own umbrella as she walked along a red carpet laid on the Opera House forecourt to meet the welcoming party.

Several thousand people crowded the Opera House steps, and cheered as the queen smiled and waved.

Wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the Australian flag, which features the British Union Jack in the top left corner, Melba Gibson, 78, said she had seen the queen on all 13 of her visits to Australia since 1954.

Clinton slated

From Page 1
ing the National Mausoleum, Clinton has proved that the US policy towards Bangladesh has been the same as it was during the country's independence in 1971.

They asked the government to lodge a protest with the US government.

Prof. Muntasir Mamun, Shahrier Kabir, Khushi Kabir, Aroma Dutt, Mosharrat Hossain and Afzal Hossain addressed the rally, among others. Sammillito Sangskritik Jote, a platform of the country's leading cultural organisations, also condemned cancellation of the visit.

"The mistake the US committed in 1971 by opposing the Liberation War could have been somewhat mended if Clinton had paid tribute at the National Mausoleum."

National Co-ordination Committee has also condemned the action.

Syed Hassan Imam and Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, convenor and member secretary of the committee in a statement said even a Pakistan president visited the National Mausoleum.

Text of press statements by Sheikh Hasina & Clinton

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Distinguished members of the press, on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh, I would like to extend a very warm and special welcome to the President of the United States of America, his excellency, Mr Bill Clinton, and distinguished members of his delegation. This is the first ever visit of a US President to Bangladesh, and it reflects the warm and friendly ties between our two countries, as well as the qualitative formation that has been taking place in our relationship.

Let me also thank President Clinton for his decision to begin his tour of South Asia from the soil of Bangladesh. We are truly honored by his presence. At this moment, I recall with gratitude the warm hospitality that was extended to me by the President and the First Lady during my brief visit to the White House in 1997. I'm proud to say that the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, imbued by deep and abiding values of freedom, democracy and equality, achieved for us this nation. He laid the foundation of Bangladesh-US relationship.

We value the relationship. It is a matter of satisfaction that these ties have grown substantially. It was, therefore, a singular honor for me today to meet President Clinton. He's an outstanding leader and statesman of our times. We discussed our bilateral relations and issues of common concern, and I am happy to say that our meeting was fruitful and productive.

We reiterated to the President that the government of Bangladesh shares the US commitment to democracy, rule of law, human rights, and free market policy. Like the US, Bangladesh also believes in peace, security, and in proactive efforts to defuse tension everywhere.

We appreciate the President's efforts and initiative to bring the Middle East closer to a lasting peace, and realize the important role played by the US in achieving peace in Bosnia, Kosovo and other regions.

We also discussed our bilateral trade with the US, which is our number one export market. Nearly \$2 billion worth of goods were exported to the US in 1998 and 99. In this context, we explained to President Clinton the liberal economic policies and programs of the government, and also discussed our proposal for increase of Bangladesh's quota of government exports, as well as duty-free and quota-free access of Bangladesh products to US.

Regarding cooperation in energy, both our countries acknowledge the immense potential in this sector and have decided to intensify our cooperation. We have initiated two production-sharing agreements with Unocal and Pangaea, Bangladesh and the US also signed a strategic objective agreement, under which the US would provide an amount of US dollar, \$30 million grant to achieve increased institutional capacity to make decisions in clean energy development; improve environment; and increase public support for energy sector reform.

In addition, we thank the President for the agreement signed between our two countries for reduction of debt and use of interest for local development activities under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998. This is a governing act for further action for cancellation of our debt under PL 480. A number of other agreements have also been finalized where US aid would be funding for this in Bangladesh.

On the question of export of gas, our position remains that after fully meeting our domestic requirements, and ensuring gas for 50 years for use of future generations, the remaining surplus gas will be available for export. Similarly, on the question of export of power, we maintain that with new gas fields being discovered and developed, we must find good use of the gas. We will, therefore, welcome proposals that are commercially viable for the export of power based on our natural gas.

We also apprised President Clinton that Bangladesh could emerge as an important center of IT industry in South Asia. Bangladesh' programmers, computer engineers and IT professionals could provide IT product services, taking advantages of the time difference between Bangladesh and the US. The US could also provide necessary technical assistance and institutional support to Bangladesh for development of IT industry. This could help create employment opportunities for the educated youth of the country.

We requested the President to expedite the deportation of the killers of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We stressed that the killers have terrorist links and that they should not be given refuge in the greatest democracy of the world, a country that upholds the rule of law. I am touched by President Clinton's sympathetic response.

We requested President Clinton to take steps to regulate the status of Bangladeshi nationals living in the US without proper

documents. I'd like to thank President Clinton for the deep personal interest he has taken in the welfare and well-being of the people of Bangladesh. I am sure that the President's visit will be a milestone in our relationship and serve to highlight the many achievements of Bangladesh and enhance its stature and standing in the world community.

President Clinton extended an invitation to me to visit his great country, which I gladly accepted. A date in October this year will be worked out for this visit.

May I now request his excellency, William Jefferson, president of the USA, to say a few words now. Thank you, and the floor is yours.

environment of Bangladesh, and sense of responsibility toward the children who will inherit the future.

Today I am pleased to announce that our Agency for International Development will provide \$50 million to Bangladesh and other nations in South Asia harness clean energy resources, reduce air pollution and fight climate change. Bangladesh also will be the very first nation to receive funding under a United States program that converts old debt to new funding to protect tropical forests.

I'm also happy to announce that our Agency for International Development and Department of Agriculture will provide \$97 million in food assistance here, and today I'm sending to our Congress the renewal of our agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Bangladesh.

Anyone who looks at the map can see that this is a nation of great rivers, from many sources merging together as they approach the Bay of Bengal. Today, from many sources of our different national traditions, we meet in Dhaka to build our common future.

Thank you very much, Prime Minister Hasina. Thank you.

The President: Would you like to call on a journalist, and then I will? Should we go to the Americans first or the Bangladeshis first? It's your call.

Q Mr President, what political and economic factors have convinced you to undertake your first visit to Bangladesh? And would the United States consider favored nation to Bangladesh as a favored nation, when India, Pakistan and South Asia are engaged in nuclear arms threats?

The President: Well, first of all, you ask what political and economic factors encouraged me to come here. I think this is a nation with a very big future. This is a nation that chose to sign and to 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 this country, as nearly as I can see, and a real commitment to the long-term welfare of its children, and one in which we feel a great deal of common interest. So to me, this was an easy decision to come here. I wanted to come here. And I look forward to a longer and richer future between the United States and Bangladesh.

Today is only 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 labor practices, the magnificent natural

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Other people who come to our country in large numbers are basically governed by our more general immigration laws. And there's a limit to what I can do. I have already taken some steps there. But I said in my opening statement, and I will say again, I think our country has been greatly enriched by the presence of Bangladeshis and we have many Bangladeshi American citizens. One of them is here with me today — Osman Siddiqui, who's our Ambassador to Fiji. And so I feel very good about the presence of Bangladeshis within the United States. But I have to observe the laws that we have.

Q Sir, can you tell us what security concerns prompted you to cancel your trip to the village today? And are you confident it will not happen again on this trip, particularly in Pakistan?

The President: The answer to the first part of your question is, no I won't, because I don't think I can. I should. But let me say that I thought it was very important for me to come here. And I think it's important for the United States to see its friends and to work for a future. I regret that I could not go to the village. And I'm delighted that the villagers are coming to see me because it will give me a chance to highlight something the American press has heard me talk about many times, which is that the whole microcredit movement in the world basically began here in Bangladesh with the Grameen Bank nearly 20 years ago — maybe more than now. And the Prime Minister and I talked about this.

I am honored that I will have a chance to see Muhammad Yunus again, to see some of the villagers, and to try to highlight the important role that I believe microcredit should have not only here in Bangladesh, but throughout all developing countries in the world. The United States, through AID, supports about 2 million microcredit loans a year in other places. So I'm delighted I'm going to be able to see the people from the village and to support this very, very important initiative in which Bangladesh is truly the world's leader.

Q Sir, and about the security on the rest of the trip?

Prime Minister Hasina: I think we can — we can stop here. Four questions already have been asked. And thank you very much. Thank you very much. And, President, thank you very much.

President Clinton: Thank you.

Prime Minister Hasina: Thank you very much.

Rousing reception

From Page 12
Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received Clinton at the VIP tarmac when he disembarked from the small jet at the Zia International Airport.

A tiny tot presented Clinton with a bouquet when he stepped down from the jet.

He was then escorted by the president and the prime minister to the saluting stage at 11:28 am. He took salute from a smartly turned out contingent drawn from the Army, Navy and Air Force as the band played the national anthems of the USA and Bangladesh.

Wearing a dark grey striped suit, President Clinton was flanked by the president and the prime minister on the dais while the chiefs of the three services stood behind.

The US president inspected the guard while the band played "Amaro Deshero Mattro Goidhey Bhore Utte Sara Mon..."

He was then introduced to Bangladesh's ministers, the prime minister's advisors, the dean of the diplomatic core, civil and military officials and US embassy staff.

The VIP lounge of ZIA was decorated with the flags and a huge red banner reading "Welcome President William J. Clinton".

Clinton was escorted to the motorcade where he boarded a landcruiser rather than one of two limousines designated for him.

US security team and bomb sniffing dogs guarded the airport. Security checked all equipment of the Bangladeshi journalists before they were allowed to enter the VIP lounge.

Clinton drove straight to the Prime Minister's Office in a ceremonial motorcade through empty streets.

Thousands of troops, paramilitary BDR and armed police guarded the route and patrolled the streets. Children lined the route, waving miniature flags and shouting slogans as Clinton's motorcade passed.

Clinton's daughter, Chelsea, and his mother-in-law, Dorothy Rodham, stayed behind in India. Chelsea visited Bangladesh with Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1995.

7 cross-examined in Khalid Murder Case

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, Mar 20: Seven more prosecution witnesses were cross-examined in Khalid Murder Case in the special court here today.

All the prosecution witnesses including Khalid's younger brother Siddiqueur Rahman told the court that Khalid succumbed to his injuries in the General Hospital on May 16 last year. He was fatally injured in an armed attack by Ershad Shikdar at the Skid Ghat the same day, they said.



Leaders of the Left Democratic Front staged a 'black flag' demonstration at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday protesting the US President's visit to Bangladesh. —Star photo

Support Dhaka's plan

From Page 1
United States showed to our people during the disastrous floods in 1998.

Shahabuddin told the guests that to fulfill the dreams of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the government had undertaken policies for rapid economic development on the basis of good governance and transparency.

Top priority has been placed on market reforms, deregulation of the economy and foreign direct investment.

The President said Bangladesh has earned the admiration of the international community for its commitment to peace and stability and its moderate and rational position on major issues and events.

Bangladesh has been a catalyst in the establishment of SAARC, it is the spokesman for the LDC countries, it is the first to sign and ratify the CTBT in South Asia, it is a member of UN Security Council and it will be hosting the NAM summit in Dhaka next year, he noted.

"We are determined to create a Sonar Bangla where our people enjoy a good quality of life in an atmosphere of peace and prosperity. In our march to our destination we have seen the support of friends, we seek the support of the United States of America," he said.

Clinton
US President Bill Clinton vowed last night the United States would work with Bangladesh to soften the hard facts of daily hardship and make the real poetry of the finest aspiration of the two nations.

One shot dead

By Staff Correspondent
A young man was shot dead by his rivals in the city yesterday afternoon, police said.

The dead was identified as Arif, 25, son of Dudu Mian of Dholaipara in the old city.

A young man shot the victim in his abdomen while he was crossing the Rashed hotel at about 2 pm, police said.

Arif was rushed to the Mitford Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Two accords

From Page 1
providing another 200,000 telephone lines.

The project includes Broadband and basic services, high speed internet access.

Tyco Submarine Systems Ltd (TSSL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tyco International Ltd, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB) to design, manufacture and install an undersea fibre optic cable system to be known as the Bangladesh-Singapore Submarine Cable System.

Scheduled for completion in 2002, the system will connect Bangladesh and Singapore and will be about 3,200 kilometers in length. This system will enable Bangladesh to link up with some of the major undersea cable systems that land in Singapore and give it worldwide connectivity.

TSSL is the world's leading supplier of undersea communication systems and services. The company owns and operates one of the world's largest fleets of world class cable ships for installation and maintenance of undersea communication networks.

Remove red tapism

From Page 1
Bangladesh take advantage of its resources while investing in critical infrastructure.

"In our view, Bangladesh must be firmly committed to pro-growth, and pro-business policies. I know, for an American official to come in, and suggest what countries should or shouldn't do, may not suit well."

"But the fact is, as democracies, we should all be sharing ideas. That's what democracies are all about. And there is a thirst for our businesses and their innovations. Every country I go to, people want to know how they can get Bill Gates or Jack Welch to invest and bring jobs."

Enforceable commercial laws are a good start. Companies look at the infrastructure, also, and at the skills and training of the workforce.

"They look at whether there is political stability, and at labour laws. We certainly applaud Bangladesh for efforts to stamp out child labour," Daley said.

With the right policies in place, Bangladesh could see sharp increases in American investments in energy resources, he said.

Describing the strength of the US economy, he said information technology and e-commerce has tremendously helped the growth. The free trade policy also helped the country generate more jobs.

He hoped that with the start of a new century, Bangladesh and USA will redouble efforts to trade more, to build Bangladesh's industrial base, so that it can produce quality products.

Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria said Bangladesh offers excellent opportunities for private investment.

"Bangladesh also has a unique locational advantage as it provides a link between South and South East and East Asian markets. It has in place the required institutional facilities for promoting private investment."

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed also sought unilateral and immediate duty-free access for Bangladesh's goods to US market and welcomed US investments in infrastructure, telecom, IT and manufacturing sectors.

"We need your support, your generous investment, your special treatment to our exportable goods," he said.

Commerce Minister Mohammad Abdul Jalil urged the US government to immediately increase Bangladesh's garments export quota by at least 30 per cent.

The USA has so far not provided any special and differential treatment to Bangladesh, which is due to her under the Agreement on Textiles and

Remove red tapism

Clinton (ATC), he said.

He also sought assured market access of IT products and easy entry of IT personnel to the USA and asked the US government not to ink non-trade issues with trade.

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Anisur Rahman Sinha sought US support to the huge outlay involved in improving workplace code of conduct and human rights and wanted quota increase for Bangladeshi apparels.

FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoop hoped that US companies would be involved in the development of down-stream utilisation of gas.

Regarding the US demand for trade union rights in the EPZs, he urged the USA to look at the labour issue with flexibility, allowing Bangladesh more time to achieve growth and reduce unemployment.

He also sought a bilateral free-trade agreement between the two countries in lieu of seeking unilateral access for Bangladeshi products to the US market.

The conference was also addressed by, among others, AmCham President Forrest E Cookson, US Congressman Frank Palone and Edward Royce.

UN rights envoy brands Kosovo mission total failure

BELGRADE, Mar 20: The UN human rights special envoy for the former Yugoslavia said Sunday that the failure of the international community to decide on a clear future for Kosovo meant the mission to the province was thus far a "total failure," reports AFP.

The present situation in Kosovo just confirms the total failure to achieve the goals of the operation," Jiri Dienstbier told AFP in Belgrade during a tour of Yugoslavia in which he has held many meetings on the Kosovo problem.

He said that the main problem for the UN administration to the disputed province and the NATO-led KFOR peace keeping force was that their mission had no clearly defined aims, adding the no-one on the international scene seemed ready to provide one.

"We have UN resolution 1244 saying that Kosovo is a part of Yugoslavia, but nobody wants to confirm it and say that it is a solution and that nobody will dispute it and that Kosovo remains a part of Yugoslavia," he said.

On the other hand, nobody wants to say that Kosovo will be independent," he added.

First female treasurer of SC Bar Assoc

Advocate Amatum Nur Begum Panua has recently been elected Treasurer of the Supreme Court Bar Association. She is also the first female lawyer elected to this post, says a press release.

In 1995, she was elected assistant secretary of the association.

Amatum Nur is the wife of freedom fighter Advocate K M Habibur Rahman Bulbul.

Obituary

Sabera Hakim, Director, Flora Limited and wife of late Md Obaidul Hakim, died of cardiac arrest on March 16, says a press release.