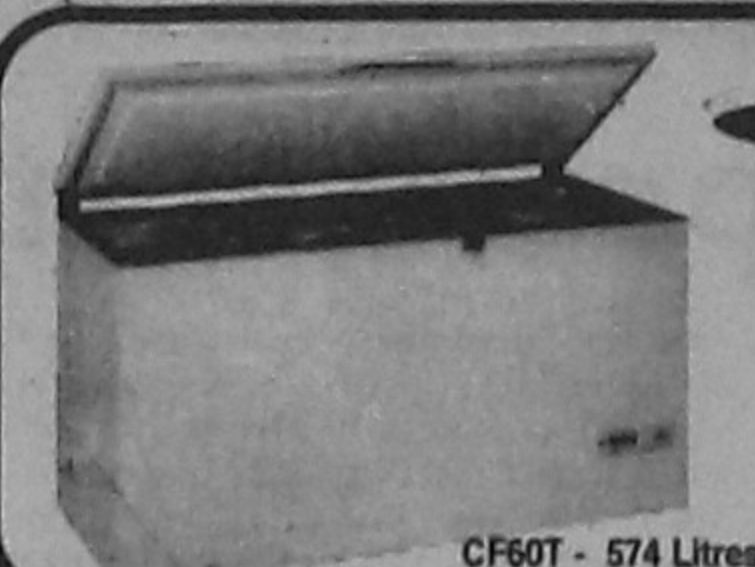


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## Rousing reception at ZIA

**By Staff Correspondent**

US President Bill Clinton was accorded a rousing reception when he arrived here yesterday morning on the first leg of his three-nation South Asian tour.

Clinton, the first US president to visit Bangladesh, was greeted with 21-gun salute as he got down from the aircraft. A presidential jet carrying Bill Clinton and his entourage touched down at Zia International Airport at 11.15 am and taxied at the VIP tarmac at 11.22 am.

The US president was scheduled to arrive from New Delhi at 10.15 am but the flight was delayed by an hour due to inclement weather.

Members of his entourage, including US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Secretary of Commerce William D. Daley got down from the special aircraft before Clinton.

President Clinton emerged from the blue and white jet alone and walked down the stairs at 11.26 am. He was received by US Ambassador John C. Holman and Chief of Protocol Mohammad Ziauddin.

President Shahabuddin

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## PM invited to visit US

President Bill Clinton invited Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to visit USA in reciprocity to his Dhaka tour, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by Prime Minister Hasina at a joint press conference with the US President yesterday afternoon in front of the International Conference Centre (ICC) after the official talks.

"President Clinton extended an invitation to me to visit his great country which I gladly accepted."

She told journalists that a date in October this year would be worked out for this visit.

## Clinton's visit protested

By Staff Correspondent Several hundred activists of the country's left-leaning political parties marched through some city streets yesterday protesting US President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh and the U.S. role in global politics.

The protesters waved black flags and carried banners and placards containing anti-US messages. They also shouted slogans against Clinton's visit which they said was aimed at robbing national resources such as oil and gas and taking over the sea port in Chittagong.

The slogans included: "Down with imperialism", "Go back, Clinton" and "We protest the plot to hand over oil and gas to U.S."

Earlier, they held a rally at Central Shaheed Minar before marching to Bahadur Shah Park. Leaders and workers of some 10 left-leaning parties including Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Workers' Party, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Samik Krishak Samajbadi Dal and Ganatantrik Biplobi Jote.

However, police dispersed the procession, snatching banners, placards and black flags from the protesters. They also beat them up and picked up some protesters but later freed them.

The speakers blamed Hasina government for bowing to U.S. pressure regarding contracts on the gas blocks. They termed U.S. a terrorist state and said U.S. did not support Bangladesh's struggle for independence.

UNB reports: Left-leaning student organisations observed 'Protest Day' on the Dhaka University campus yesterday, staging demonstrations against US President Bill Clinton's visit here.

The protesters grouped under the banner of Twelve Anti-Imperialism Student Organisations alleged that police foiled their bid to march out of the Dhaka University campus to demonstrate on the streets.

They brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus at 11.45 am and held a rally in front of the main gate of the Arts building.

The student leaders said the country's student community 'rejected' the US president's maiden trip to Bangladesh whose 1971 independence struggle was opposed by the then American administration. Meanwhile, Pro-Awami Chhatra League also brought out a procession on the DU campus welcoming the US President here.

They also held a rally in front of the DUCSU Bhaban.

**Editor: Mahfuz Anam**

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President Clinton waves to crowds as President Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Hasina look on at ZIA after the U.S. president's arrival here yesterday morning. —Star photo



President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina lead their sides during official talks at International Conference Centre yesterday. —Star photo

## Official talks: Gas export

From Page 1

Chief of Staff John Podesta, Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth and National Economic Counselor Rick Samans.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister was assisted by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, Commerce Minister M A Jall, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary Dr S A Samad, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami and Press Secretary Jawadul Karim.

In her introductory remarks, the Prime Minister said nuclear tests would only destroy the economy of the poor countries. "Instead of going for nuclear programmes, developing countries can spend the money on education and other poverty eradication programmes."

She said the US President's visit bears the testimony of friendly relations between the two countries on peace, democracy and rule of law.

President Clinton praised Sheikh Hasina's efforts for peace in South Asia after nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. He also appreciated the ratification of the CTBT.

BSS adds: Hasina requested Clinton to speed up the deportation of the killers of Bangabandhu who are now living in the United States.

Being the greatest democracy, the United States should not provide refuge to the killers,

Sheikh Hasina said.

About extradition of the killers of Bangabandhu, President Clinton said there should be an extradition treaty.

The Prime Minister said a draft of the treaty has already been sent to the US authorities. "Bangladesh would deeply appreciate efforts of Department of State and Department of Justice to send back the killers who had committed heinous crimes to humanity."

Hasina also urged Clinton to continue to lend US support to the democratic governments and discourage unconstitutional and illegal change of government.

"The United States as the champion of democracy and human rights, should continue to send strong messages to the world in support of democratic governments and strongly discourage unconstitutional and illegal change of government," Sheikh Hasina said during the official talks.

UNB adds: Clinton billed his maiden visit to Dhaka as "only the beginning of a stronger partnership" with Bangladesh that would nudge bilateral economic ties.

"Today, from many sources of our different national traditions, we meet in Dhaka to build our common future," he told newsmen after the talks.

Clinton said he felt proud to be the first President of the United States to tour Bangladesh. "But I'm quiet sure I'll not be the last."

Clinton said though far apart geographically, "Our nations grow closer everyday through expanding trade, through the Internet revolu-

tion, and through our shared interest in building a world more peaceful, more tolerant, more prosperous and more free."

Referring to Bangladesh's religion, culture and democratic practices, he said the USA admires Bangladesh as a nation proud of its Islamic heritage, proud of unique culture, proud of its commitment to tolerance and democracy, and proud of its participation in the world community.

Touching on Bangladesh's active role in international affairs, Clinton said: "We are grateful for your leadership in the United Nations and your courageous example in sending peacekeepers to end the conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo."

He said America particularly honoured Bangladesh as the first nation in South Asia to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

About the talks with Premier Sheikh Hasina today he said: "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."

Clinton said: "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."

Clinton was accompanied by the secretary of state, the chief of national security council, the White House chief of staff, the assistant secretary of state, the U.S. ambassador.

Khaleda presented Clinton with a 'sheaf of paddy' made of gold and a 'bullock-cart' made of silver.

## Khaleda-Clinton talks

From Page 1

and the CHT Peace Accord.

She said the government has killed 300 opposition activists, arrested about 10,000 others and implicated about 60,000 leaders and workers in false cases.

The former prime minister said existing laws were enough to curb crime and violence, but the government was using the Public Safety Act to harass the opposition.

The U.S. president said Bangladesh is a country of immense possibility. However, he said foreign investors were avoiding it due to the prolonged political conflict. Foreign investment and socio-economic development cannot be achieved if the conflict continues, he maintained.

Clinton said the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan created an unprecedented opportunity for Bangladesh since the international image of both countries was affected.

Meeting sources said Clinton told Khaleda that he was fully aware of social, political and human rights situation in Bangladesh. He added the U.S.

government was closely monitoring the situation in Bangladesh.

The U.S. president recalled that he had met Khaleda Zia twice in the past and Hillary Clinton and his daughter, Chelsea, visited Bangladesh while BNP was in power.

Clinton also recalled that he talked with Khaleda over phone when she was the Prime Minister to request her to send Bangladesh troops for the peace keeping force in Haiti.

Earlier, Khaleda wished Hillary Clinton success in the ensuing Senate election. BNP leaders Prof. A.Q.M. Badruddoza Chowdhury, M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Nazmul Huda, M. Morshed Khan and M.M. Rezaul Karim assisted Khaleda Zia during the meeting.

Clinton was accompanied by the secretary of state, the chief of national security council, the White House chief of staff, the assistant secretary of state, the U.S. ambassador.

Khaleda presented Clinton with a 'sheaf of paddy' made of gold and a 'bullock-cart' made of silver.

## Every child has right to dream: Clinton

Impressed by unrelenting struggles for eradicating poverty and illiteracy of a young nation, US President Bill Clinton yesterday said no one should believe that pauperism is the destiny, people have to remain poor and their children cannot learn, reports UNB.

"Every child of this world should be given the chance to dream and live in those dreams," Clinton told villagers brought from Joytura to the US Embassy in the city to share their tales of improving their lifestyles by using microcredits.

The US-President pledged to do "what I can do to be a good partner and friend of Bangladesh."

Just hours before starting his daylong trip to Bangladesh, the White House scrubbed a 32-kilometre side trip to the village of Joytura in Dhamrai thana on advice of the Secret Service. It cited a "credible" threat of danger from flying over unguarded forests and rice paddies to the hamlet, where microfinance worked wonder.

The 90-minute visit was billed as an opportunity to visit a BRAC school and Grameen Bank's micro-credit lending operations that make small, targeted loans to entrepreneurs

and small businesses.

Clinton was not there in Joytura to see those programmes and to chat with the villagers under a century-old Banyan tree as was originally scheduled, but the villagers were brought to Dhaka to see the President.

"Intelligence, ability and human spirit are equally distributed in the region. One must have a chance, every little boy and girl should be given the chance," said the US President.

The President, accompanied by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, spent nearly two hours among the Joytura inhabitants in the US mission compound. Hasina briefed him on her government's Arsayan project for providing homes to the homeless people.

A total of 16,000 families have been rehabilitated under this poverty programme, the prime minister said expressing the determination to make sure that none remains homeless in the country.

President Clinton also talked to the students of a BRAC school and observed the operation of Grameen bank demonstrated before him. Clinton heard the experiences of the micro-credit beneficiaries in pres-

ence of two NGO kingpins — Grameen founder Prof Muhammad Yunus and BRAC chief Fazle Hossain Abed.

There are more than 34,000 one-room, one-teacher and 33-student BRAC schools across the country providing basic education to 1.1 million children, 66 per cent of them girls, BRAC officials said.

The US President said he would tell his fellow Americans as well as the world that people of Bangladesh are a good investment in the future. It has a Grameen Bank with 2.4-million borrowers in 39,000 villages, 94 per cent of them are women, and the repayment rate is 98 per cent.

He thanked the government for taking out 9,000 children from garment industry and putting them in ILO and USA-supported schools in a comprehensive drive for eliminating child labour.

Clinton committed several million dollars for 30,000 Bangladesh children to move from work to schools, for the health insurance of rural women under ILO and Grameen projects, and solar energy projects to provide cheap and clean power to villagers.

## Visit disrupts

From Page 1

high rises along Clinton's route. Spotter planes and helicopters also kept watch over Dhaka for signs of trouble.

Most shops and businesses along VIP Road remained closed, while a number restaurants and markets were also closed.

Some business executives said they gave their staff the day off yesterday considering the tight security surrounding Clinton's historic visit.

Flights at Zia International Airport were also affected for about 14 hours. However, authorities had announced that delays would occur. Airport officials said they didn't know how many flights were affected by delays.

Kamalapur Railway Station was also affected for about five hours from 10:00 a.m., while inter-district buses service, including the Dhaka-Calcutta route, was also partially affected.

The city's transportation system, including buses operated by BRTC and private operators, were also affected.

## Belated tribute

From Page 1

The anti-Bangladesh role of the then US President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is well known.

Despite Clinton's courageous remarks on Bangladesh's armed struggle for independence in 1971, his failure to visit the National Memorial at Savar evoked a lot of criticism.

US sources said Clinton's visit to the martyrs' memorial at Savar and a Grameen Bank micro-credit project and a BRAC primary school at nearby Joytura village was dropped due to "security reasons."

## Sharif

From Page 1

he was initially told to divert his aircraft to a Middle Eastern country.

But he refused because of lack of fuel. He circled Karachi for more than one hour with 198 passengers and crew aboard.

The death penalty was requested as the prosecution launched into its final arguments just days before the trial is expected to conclude.

The prosecution is allowed another two days of arguments. The court then will hear the defense.

## Security, or lack of it?

From Page 1

The US President did not arrive in the special Boeing which is called the Air Force One. His aircraft was kept parked at Delhi. Instead, he arrived in Dhaka in a smaller jet.

For purpose of identification, any aircraft used by the US President is called Air Force One and his helicopter Marine One. The US Presidential fleet to Dhaka also included a C-17 Globemaster, a C-130 aircraft and a Northwest 747.

On arrival at the Zia International Airport, the President was whisked away by the US Secret Service and was led into a 'land cruiser' instead of one of the two limousines, all flown from the US. This method of using 'decoy cars' was resorted to more than twice during his visit, sources said.

A surveillance aircraft was kept flying for 12 hours from 10 in the morning. It landed only once for refuelling. Other spotter aircraft and helicopters were kept flying in the air while the US President was moving in the city by road.

Despite such high security measures taken by the US, which engaged several advance teams for many days, the reasons for changes in the programme could not be known. A well placed source said it was not unlikely that wrong information or 'disinformation' by interested quarters may have led to some 'programme casual-

ties. A highly placed security official when asked said, "Bangladesh is, security wise, very safe. We can provide absolute security cover in any particular place in the country. It is up to the guest to accept or not."

When asked by a newsmen at the joint press briefing yesterday afternoon, President Clinton did not give any direct reply on the issue.

An American reporter asked him: "Sir, can you tell us what security concerns prompted you to cancel your trip to the village (Joytura) today? And are you confident it will not happen again on this trip, particularly in Pakistan?"

Clinton replied, "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 (tell) 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 micro-credit movement in the world basically began here in Bangladesh with the Grameen Bank nearly 20 years ago—maybe more than that now."

## Albright visits children's home

By Special Correspondent

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited a children's home and vocational training centre run by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association and Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Dhamondi yesterday.

Association sources said Albright was moved to see Robin, a 5-year old boy who had been rescued from Dubai where he worked as a camel jockey, at the home.

Two agreements providing \$ 417,000 US and \$950,000 US for the AATSEC and the association were signed during the visit under a USAID programme to provide legal aid and rehabilitation of the women and child victims of trafficking.

## PID runs full-fledged media centre

By Staff Correspondent

For the first time an all purpose media centre is being run by the Press Information Department at the Sheraton Hotel.

Opened to cater to requirements of the foreign media on the occasion of President Bill Clinton's visit, the centre began to function officially from March 19 and will continue to operate till this evening.

The centre manned by a large number of information officials of the PID has been operating round the clock. Thirty computers were set up with full-time availability of e-mail facilities. A colour lab was also available at the centre. Some 200 foreign journalists had used the centre till yesterday.

Haque, who was present on the dock when the charge was read out to him, pleaded not guilty.



## Osman Siddique in Clinton's delegation

Star Report

Osman Siddique, the first Bangladeshi and Muslim to serve as a United States ambassador, accompanied US President Bill Clinton to Dhaka.

Clinton asked Siddique, US Ambassador to Fiji, to be part of his delegation during his visit to South Asia. Siddique will also accompany the president to India.

Siddique, son of the late Dr Osman Ghani, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, was sworn in as the US Ambassador to Fiji last August after he was nominated by Clinton and appointed by the United States Senate.

Born in Dhaka in 1950, Siddique is a successful American businessman. He received his MBA from Indiana University in 1974. He is the president and chief executive officer of ITI/Travelogue Inc., a corporate travel management company he founded in 1976.

ITI/Travelogue Inc. is one of the top minority owned businesses in metropolitan Washington and one of the largest travel management companies in United States.

ITI/Travelogue Inc. was honored with the Arthur Anderson and Washington Business Journal's Fast Track Award for being one of the fastest growing companies in Washington.

Siddique has also been a two-time finalist for Inc. Magazine's Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

In addition to his business, Siddique has been active in the community. He has served on several presidential delegations, including the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism and the First Hemispheric Trade and Commerce Forum.

He also served as a member of the National Democratic Institute's International Delegation, which observed Bangladesh's parliamentary elections in 1996.

Siddique is a member of the Board of Trustees of Bryant College, the Board of Directors of Partners for Development and a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Centre for New Americans.

## Mazedul Haque charged for misuse of govt vehicles

A court charged former minister Maj Gen (ret'd) M Mazedul Haque yesterday with losing over Tk 20 lakh by misuse of government vehicles, reports UNB.

Divisional Special Judge Mohammad Fazul Karim presided in the case, which was filed by Anti-Corruption Officer Mohammad Ahsan Ali with the Motijheel thana in October 1996.

It was stated the former Water Resources Minister abused his power when he made personal use of two government vehicles reserved for the use of project directorate, from January 1994 to March 1996. He cost the government over Tk 20 lakh and committed an offence under Section 5 (2) of the Anti-Corruption Act, 1947.

Haque, who was present on the dock when the charge was read out to him, pleaded not guilty.

## Koirala new PM of Nepal

KATHMANDU, Mar 20: Nepal's King Birendra today appointed his former foe Girija Prasad Koirala as prime minister of the Himalayan kingdom for his record fourth term in nine years, a palace announcement said, reports Reuters.

Koirala, chief of the centrist Nepal Congress party, fought 50 years for democracy and spent seven years in jail for opposing absolute monarchy which ended in 1990.

"His Majesty the King has appointed Nepali Congress parliamentary party leader Girija Prasad Koirala as prime minister," a palace statement on state radio said.

Koirala succeeds Congress's Krishna Prasad Bhattarai who resigned last Thursday without facing a party vote on whether to dump him for what it says was his failure to contain a bloody Maoist insurgency.

The new prime minister would be sworn in on Wednesday when he would also name his cabinet. Congress spokesman Narahari Acharya said.



## A hearty welcome

Boys and girls dressed in traditional lungis and sarees greet the U.S. president in front of the Prime Minister's Office yesterday. —Star photo