

DHAKA TODAY

Group Art Exhibition

Saju Art Gallery will inaugurate the 43rd Grand Group Art Exhibition of Reputed Bangladeshi and Foreign Artists 2001. Venue: Saju Art Gallery, DCC North Super Market, 2nd Circle Gulshan. Time: 4.30 pm.

Roundtable

The Daily Prothom Alo will hold a roundtable on "What is the Hindrance to Privatisation?" Venue: Top of the Park, Hotel Sheraton. Time: 10.30 am.

DHAKA TOMORROW

DCH seminar

Dhaka Community Hospital will hold a seminar on "Political Economy of Cancer." Keynote speaker: Dr. Shabir Dasgupta, Oncologist. Venue: DCH auditorium. Time: 10.00 am-1.00 pm.

Discussion meeting

Jatiya Church Parishad will hold a discussion meeting on Jubilee and Third World debt. Venue: Ballroom of Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 3.00 pm.

Discussion meeting

Centre for Social Science and Public Policy Research of Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) will hold a discussion meeting on "Managing Bilateral Relations between Big and Small Countries to Mutual Benefit: Lessons from the USA-Canada Experience." Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 3.00 pm.

President offers prayer at Nat'l Eidgah Maidan

BSS, Dhaka

President Shahabuddin Ahmed offered his Eid prayers at the National Eidgah Maidan at 8 am on Wednesday.

Among others, Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury offered his Eid prayers with the president. After the prayer, the president exchanged greetings with ministers.

Later, the president hosted a reception at Bangabhaban for the diplomats and representatives of international agencies. Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Shabata Zarab was present on the occasion. President Shahabuddin welcomed the guests and exchanged pleasantries with them.

The president also hosted a separate reception for the local elite. Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, former chief justice Latifur Rahman, ministers, judges of the Supreme Court state ministers, chiefs of staffs of Army, Navy and Air Force, political leaders, members of parliament, secretaries, editors, educationists, senior lawyers, doctors, artists and social workers, journalists, bankers, heads of departments and retired high officials attended the reception.

President Shahabuddin welcomed the guests and exchanged Eid pleasantries with them. He also enquired about their welfare.

Blast in Chinese 'classroom' fireworks factory kills 60

AFP, Beijing

A huge explosion ripped through a school in east China where pupils as young as eight were forced to make fireworks, killing up to 60 people including many children.

The blast at around 11:00 am local time on Wednesday flattened the two-storey school building in the village of Fanglin in Jiangxi province where an illegal fireworks factory had been set up three years ago, sources said.

Villagers using spades and their bare hands desperately tried to rescue children and teachers from the rubble of the school in Wazai county, many of whom suffered horrific burns.

"I helped them dig out 30 to 40 bodies. They were all dead, not one was alive. They suffered terribly. Some of the bodies had their heads

blown off," Ding Haigan, a builder who lives opposite the school, told the news agency.

The official Xinhua news agency said 41 people died and 27 were injured in the explosion, but Ding put the death toll at over 60.

A doctor at Tanbu township hospital in Wazai county who arrived on the scene within minutes said a class of third grade pupils, aged between eight and nine, had been putting fuses into firecrackers at the time of the blast.

"The third grade pupils were working on firecrackers in their classroom on the first floor. In the third grade classroom there were 45 pupils, and only two or three are still alive," said the doctor, asking to remain anonymous.

An official at Tanbu hospital declined to give an exact death toll, but he said six adults also died. Five

teachers and an elderly man.

Villager Ding said the fireworks enterprise was set up by the headteacher with the help of the village's Communist Party secretary, adding that Jiangxi is a major fireworks producing region.

"They began forcing students to do this two to three years ago. Teachers gave responsibility to the kids to make firecrackers during their lunch hour. The school wanted to make money," said Ding.

"They didn't pay the kids anything. The parents complained many times to the school and the township government, but nothing happened."

Another villager said the elementary school with 400 pupils would produce as many as 1,500 firecrackers in a week. A third resident said the school principal had fled after the blast.

Nasim calls on his Saudi counterpart

BSS, Makkah

Home, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim called on Saudi Arabian Home Minister Naib Bin Prince Abdul Aziz at his office in Makkah on Tuesday evening.

They discussed a range of issues relating to bilateral and mutual interest during their 40-minute long meeting.

Referring to the brotherly relations between the two Muslim nations, he expressed his sincere thanks to the Saudi government for providing adequate security and assistance to the Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims every year.

Referring to the 500 Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims who were cheated in Bangladesh, the minister said they finally got the chance to perform Hajj this year at the timely intervention of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The minister extended thanks to the Saudi government on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for making the arrangements of Hajj pilgrimage by the 500 pilgrims.

He also expressed thanks to the Saudi government on behalf of himself and his wife Mrs Laila Nasim for allowing them state honours during Hajj pilgrimage.

The minister invited his Saudi counterpart to visit Bangladesh which the Saudi home minister accepted gladly.

Confusion persists over Mori's resignation plan

AFP, Tokyo

Against all odds, Japan's embattled Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori seemed Friday to have clung to power -- at least to fight another day -- confounding a barrage of news reports predicting he would announce his plans to resign.

Throughout Friday, Mori's political allies busied themselves denying fevered speculation he was about to announce his resignation.

Yasuo Fukuda, the chief cabinet secretary, categorically denied the reports.

"There is no such discussion. I know there are media reports on it, but we (Mori and Fukuda) have not discussed them," he told a press conference.

"We are not clear where the information is coming from. I cannot comment on reports that have no substance."

The premier himself remained tight-lipped over his intentions.

"I cannot discuss such a matter with you here," Mori told reporters

at his official residence, according to Jiji Press.

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun economic daily had said in its Friday morning edition that Mori would announce his decision to quite as early as Friday.

To add to the uncertainty, the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper conceded in its English-language edition Friday that plans for Mori to meet US President George W. Bush in Washington on March 19 would allow him to delay announcing his decision to quit.

Foreign Minister Yohei Kono told a press conference that Japan had asked Washington to set the Bush-Mori summit for March 19.

By late afternoon, the media was backtracking from its reporting of Mori's political demise.

"It seems that the announcement of his resignation will come tomorrow," Jiji quoted an unnamed LDP officer as saying late Friday afternoon.

3 murdered

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thana of Comilla. Rafiq was wanted in several cases including one under PSA with Khulshi thana.

Chandgaon police recovered the body of one unidentified person from a drain near the office of Water Development Board at Bahadurhat on Wednesday. There were marks of injury on the body.

A wood cutter Shahabuddin, 45, was shot dead by forest guards at north Khagoda under Rangunia thana on Thursday night.

Rangunia police recovered the body yesterday morning.

Separate cases were filed with respective thanas.

JP, IOJ 'hurt

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Jamaat-e-Islami however did not find anything wrong in BNP's demand for election in May.

City Jamaat Amier Azharul Islam said Khaleda's move for early election is not in contrast with the alliance's stance.

A JP delegation led Manzur met the President after the Leader of the Opposition called on him.

Manzur said they discussed release of party chief HM Ershad and some other issues including the next caretaker government.

Govt stance after PM's return

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League leaders yesterday ruled out the possibility of holding the next general election in May.

"Begum Zia's demand to hold the general election in May is neither logical nor feasible as per the constitutional provision", Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman told BSS yesterday.

Awami League leaders yesterday termed Khaleda's demand as a "political bluff to confuse people."

"Begum Zia's demand for holding election by May lacks sincerity and the constitutional provision does not permit to hold the next election by May," Zillur Rahman said.

He said the constitution stipulates that the government would resign and hand over power to a neutral caretaker government three months ahead of election.

Now if the prime minister resigns

on March 12, returning home from Saudi Arabia on March 11 after Hajj, the holding of election by May is not possible as demanded by the opposition leader, Zillur Rahman said.

He said the election could only be held by June and not May as per constitutional provision if the prime minister resigns on that day (March 12).

He said if Khaleda is really sincere about election, she can discuss it with the President keeping aside any political ill motive after returning home from China and only then early election can be held following the constitutional provisions and the law relating to election.

"We are eagerly waiting to hear from her a clear statement about it," Zillur said.

He said it is really a good sign that Khaleda at long last has been telling only about election instead of demanding resignation of the gov-

ernment.

Awami League Presidium Member and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister, Suranjit Sengupta, urged Khaleda to refrain from embarrassing the President.

"President is a symbol of unity and any politically conscious citizen knows his limitations in a parliamentary system of government," he said.

Regarding Khaleda's demand for holding election in May, Sengupta said first she will have to say clearly whether they have abandoned their demand for resignation of the government.

She will also have to repent for damaging huge public property and killing many people by enforcing meaningless hartal and gherao and disastrous programmes in the last four and eight months rule of the Awami League government.

No headway in hostage crisis

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dissatisfaction over developments concerning release of the hostages. They said it was not clear to them how negotiations were taking place. They said they expected that the authorities would involve experts from Scotland Yard in the negotiations.

About a week back, the leaders at a public meeting at Bethchhari army camp gave the abductors a two-day ultimatum for release of the hostages and warned of a "massive army action" for non-compliance.

On Wednesday, when some reporters went to interview Kalparanjan Chakma at his residence, he told them that he had sent a messenger to contact the abductors and it would take about 24 hours to hear from them. The minister did not hold a scheduled press conference at the Rangamati Circuit House on Thursday.

The Minister reportedly told some reporters yesterday that he was suffering from diarrhoea.

Local people said the hostage crisis is now entering a "political phase" and everyday things are becoming tougher for the media-

tors. They expressed surprise how Shantu Larma, Chairman of CHT Regional Council, and its 22 members were kept out of the negotiations. Shantu Larma was brought up at Ramharipara in Kalapahar area and was the leader of former Shantibahini, which signed a peace accord with the government in 1997 ending years of insurgency in the CHT.

"According to clauses 22a, b, c and d of the Regional Council resolution, Larma and his council members must be involved in any crisis involving law and order in the CHT, but here they have been tactfully left aside," said a resident of Rangamati requesting anonymity.

People from different walks of life in Rangamati said the three foreigners were abducted by a group of bandits led by Amullyadhorn Chakma, who had long been involved in various highway crimes. After signing of the accord, neither the law enforcers nor political leaders cared to take steps to contain crimes in the CHT, they said.

"Now, whoever succeeds in securing release of the hostages, will take the credit, Awami League leadership is divided into two camps in

Rangamati and there has long been a rivalry over supremacy. So, while one camp is trying for a solution, the other is keeping away," said a former Shantibahini leader.

Many local residents brushed aside the allegation that United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), which opposes the peace accord, was behind the abduction.

But they did not rule out the possibilities of some UPDF members joining the abductors to delay the process of negotiations to ridicule the government.

"There is no reason why they (negotiators) should fail to establish a direct contact with the abductors," a local resident said. The political factors should come to a consensus before it is too late, he said.

An army officer at Bethchhari army camp said more than one thousand troops have been deployed to cordon off the area they suspected the hostages were kept.

"It will be very difficult for the abductors to escape through the cordon and go elsewhere. Furthermore, with the three hostages, they will not be able to cross the steep hills and go to Tripura in India," he said seeking anonymity.

Khaleda meets President

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holding election in May.

He said the Opposition leader also apprised the President of the deteriorating law and order in the country, crimes and killings allegedly by ruling party men and sons and relatives some ministers and MPs and the overall economic situation. She also mentioned the killing of four persons including a policeman in firing on a BNP procession from a ruling party procession led by Dr Iqbal MP on February 13 in the city.

Later, talking to The Daily Star, Bhuiyan said the President is the number one citizen of the country and so BNP thought it is logical to place the demand for election to him.

He said there is no need to go to the Prime Minister for this because she has no authority to announce election. The PM should resign immediately and suggest the President to dissolve parliament to pave the way for holding election.

Justifying the demand for election in May, he said it will not be possible to hold election in the rainy season, which starts after June.

Bhuiyan said experiences in 1991 and 1996 general elections shows that it is wise to complete polls within three months of resignation of a government.

Replying to a question whether BNP would accept former Chief Justice Latifur Rahman as head of the next caretaker government, Bhuiyan said, "There is no scope for non-acceptance or an alternative."

"This is a settled issue. There is nothing to talk about this because as per the Constitution Justice Latifur Rahman will be the head of the next caretaker government to conduct the polls."

"The Justice Latifur Rahman was

a justice and held the highest post in the Judiciary. We hope he will discharge his duties neutrally."

Asked about Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed, Bhuiyan said, "The AL government appointed the CEC ignoring Opposition's demand. We are watching him."

Asked about Election Commission's invitation to BNP for talks on the next election and electoral reforms, the BNP secretary general said they will not go for talks with the CEC if Election Commissioner Shafiqur Rahman remains present at the meeting. The EC has invited BNP for talks in mid-March.

Bhuiyan said BNP will reply to the EC's invitation if the pre-condition is met.

He alleged that Shafiqur Rahman was a man of Awami League and one of the organisers of the "so-called Jamatar Mancha". He got extension of service and appointment Election Commissioner by the AL government. Shafiqur Rahman must quit the EC immediately, he added.

Bhuiyan said the EC must be recast before election and all "party men" removed from it. "Not only Awami League men, if there is any BNP man, he should be replaced by neutral persons," he added.

"Illegal arms have flooded the country during AL's rule and notorious terrorists have been given arms licenses". These licenses must be cancelled and all illegal arms recovered before the polls to ensure a free, fair and neutral election, he added.

"Awami League men in the administration must not be given any important duty regarding the election", he said.

Jiang Zemin

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She highly commended the all-round progress made by the Chinese people under the dynamic leadership of President Jiang Zemin. She expressed satisfaction at the return of Hong Kong and Macao to the territorial control of Mainland China and expressed hope that Taiwan would also follow suit shortly.

Khaleda Zia reiterated her party's total and unequivocal commitment to the "One China" policy and expressed solidarity with the Chinese claim on Taiwan as an integral part of China.

Jiang Zemin thanked Khaleda and said that the return of Taiwan should not take an unduly long time. He said China continues to believe in the principles of peace, democracy and development.

Both leaders agreed that the fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries should be further strengthened in future. The President thanked Khaleda for her invitation for visiting Bangladesh.

BNP leaders Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain MP, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, M Moshed Khan MP, Farida Hasan, MM Rezaul Karim, MAH Selim and Khaleda's private secretary Mossaddek Ali Falu are members of the BNP Chairperson's entourage.

Shantu Larma

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Agreement." "Our repeated appeal to the government for controlling the anti-agreement terrorists went unheeded because a vested quarter of the government is with them," said Larma, now chairman of the CHT Regional Council.

He suspected a senior leader of the hill region to be behind the whole episode of the abduction drama.

Convener of the Sammilita Nari Samaj Hazra Sultana, women leader Ume Mong, Regional Council member KS Mong, president of Hill Women Federation Wai Prue Ching, Rangamati Communist Party President Dilip Dev and Dr Alo Rani Aich also spoke at the rally.

Several thousand tribal women from the three hill districts joined the rally.

The Regional Council Chairman, Shantu Larma, said that the women of the Hill Tracts were feeling insecure due to non-implementation of the Peace Agreement.Ns

Telephones

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phases before installation of its network. Moreover, the government would get 2.5 per cent of the revenue earned by the company from licence and frequency fees. BTB would get 60 per cent of the fees for nationwide and international calls.

There are now 235,000 telephone connections in the capital and more than 150,000 applications for fixed phones are lying with BTB.

An official noted that fixed phones are also very important in view of the growth of Internet in the country. "An Internet enthusiast could not get connection with the World Wide Web (WWW) if he does not have such a basic telephone because the standard practice to get connected with the WWW is through dial up."

He added that dial up system is mandatory in the country as Internet Service Providers (ISP) are yet to come up with radio or wireless networking.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions in next 12 hours till 6 pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country during period. Met office said and predicted little change in day temperature.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 33.8 degree Celsius at Teknaf and the lowest 13.8 degree Celsius at Srirangal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:06 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:11 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	30.9	17.5	61	42
Chittagong	33.2	16.0	69	41
Rajshahi	31.8	15.5	50	50
Khulna	31.0	18.0	73	62
Barisal	29.5	15.8	58	64
Sylhet	29.6	17.6	60	55
Cox's Bazar	33.5	20.0	58	60

The City Panorama

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way to stop people's migration to the capital is to create sufficient employment opportunities in other cities.

Landless, destitute and unemployed people make a beeline for places where employment opportunities are abundant. Subsequent governments have encouraged entrepreneurs and given them certain incentives to set up industries in the northern towns. After the construction of the Jamuna bridge, the road link which was previously absent, has now become a viable proposition. If the government ensures adequate supply of power and gives the entrepreneurs certain other incentives in addition to tax holidays and lower tariff, they will be positively motivated to locate their projects in the north. And the migrants from the villages in such situation will head for the north instead of Dhaka. This may go a long

way to reduce the pressure of population on Dhaka.

On the occasion of the World Habitat Day 2000, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government would build a new administrative Dhaka City free from the din and bustle from commercial and business activities, as it was essential to shift administrative offices including the Secretariat and the residences of the ministers to solve the acute congestion problems of the capital city.

In view of the haphazard growth of the city, there are many keen observers, including the Director-General of the Department of Environment, who feel the one alternative may be to remove the capital to a spot outside the city and start all over again in a planned manner. The shifting of capitals has several precedents in our own history, let alone that of other nations, including Pakistan.

Headquarters Bangladesh Coast Guard DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka-1206

Re-Tender Notice

CG/OPS-511/475 Date: February 22, 2001

1. Bangladesh Coast Guard invites re-tender for purchasing the undermentioned goods for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Sl No	Description of goods	Quantity
a)	Diving Set	04 pieces
b)	Diving Compressor	02 pieces

2. Schedule of tender containing the necessary terms and conditions can be procured on any working day during office hours from headquarters of Coast Guard, Plot No-511, Lane No-09, DOHS, Baridhara, on payment of Taka 160/00 (non-refundable).

3. The last date of selling tender is 19th March, 2001. The last time of receiving tender is March 20, 2001 at 11:30 hours. The tenders will be opened the same day at 12:00 hours.

4. Two copies of tenders will have to be submitted the total cost will have to be mentioned along with the single cost. Require certificate/papers for each goods will have to be submitted with the tender as per ruling.

5. The Director General, Bangladesh Coast Guard reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason.

M Fazlur Rahman
Commander BN
G-434
On behalf of the Director General.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Relief & Rehabilitation Directorate
House Building & Finance Corporation Bhaban (5th floor)
22, Purana Paltan, Dhaka
Memo No-RRD/RS-2/Relief-18/2000/65
Dated: 13-11-1407 Bangla/25-02-2001

Re-Tender Notice
Subject: Appointment of C&F Agents & Transport Contractors for Dhaka and Chittagong Region for Unloading and Transporting Relief Materials under Relief & Rehabilitation Directorate

Tenders in separate sealed envelopes for Dhaka & Chittagong regions are invited from bonafide Bangladeshi C&F licence holder trading establishments as per terms and conditions in the schedule for appointing C&F Agents and carrying contractors for unloading relief materials brought from foreign country or to be sent to foreign country and for carrying those unloaded materials to various relief warehouses of various district/upazila from the central warehouse as demand of the authority for a period of 1 (one) year from the date of signing contract for Dhaka and Chittagong region under Relief & Rehabilitation Directorate.