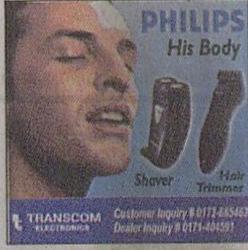




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SECOND EDITION

TODAY'S ISSUE 20 PAGES



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A star-studded night to remember

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star, the country's most-read English daily, yesterday celebrated 15 years of its publication—journalism without fear or favour—with its readers, patrons and well-wishers showering the Star family with admiration and encouragement.

The gala night at the city's Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre witnessed the presence of a galaxy of personalities representing all spectra of the society.

Participation of enlightened personalities from both home and abroad, including microcredit guru Prof Muhammad Yunus, former president of the Philippines Fidel Ramos, journalist Kuldip Nayar and a host of other dignitaries, made the 15th anniversary celebration of The Daily Star a remarkable one.

The newspaper that began its journey back in 1991 with a firm commitment to uphold "people's right to know" shared the joy of its success with hundreds of well-wishers, patrons, politicians, members of the cabinet, social and

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THE DAILY STAR'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY

Yunus spells out nation's rosy future

Urges people to stand up to ensure fair polls, change political trend and reject nominations of corrupts in next elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Global personality Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged the nation to elect honest and strong leadership through a free and fair election next year to steer the nation to the next big leap forward.

The pioneer of microcredit said despite poor political leadership that has bred overwhelming corruption, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress because of the role of its common people. The present negative political climate is holding back the nation. The people should stand up to change the trend through a free and fair election.

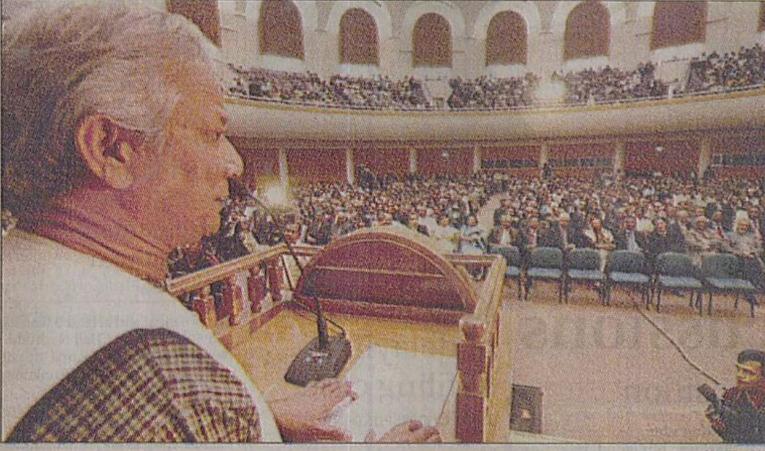
Speaking as chief guest at the celebration of 15th anniversary of The Daily Star, Prof Yunus drew a picture of a prosperous Bangladesh that can be achieved merely by changing the present political trend.

He noted that Bangladesh is lucky to have China and India—two

fast growing global giants—next doors. "We must assess our best interest in building our relationship with them. In their turn, they'll assess their best interest in having us as their neighbour," he said. "We can get a ride on the fast train with them."

The country needs an open-door policy to make itself international investors' first choice, the eminent economist told the gathering of around 3,000 representing a cross section of people. The audience included former president of the Philippines Fidel Ramos, editors from a few prominent media houses of India, Pakistan, Nepal and Thailand, professionals, intellectuals and politicians.

Bangladesh has built a very strong foundation to make the big leap forward. He said. "We are ready to launch ourselves into a path to cross USD 1,000 per capita income, 8 percent GDP growth rate, and reducing poverty level to under 25 percent in the near



Grameen Bank Chairman Prof Muhammad Yunus speaks at the 15th anniversary function of The Daily Star at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

future."

Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and Rokia A Rahman, chair of the Mediaworld, the company owning the paper, also spoke on the occasion.

Yunus said, "Our non-stop political bickering does not give a respite to celebrate... our enormous successes to prepare ourselves to reach out to still higher levels of accomplishments."

He went on, "This year... people have to make their minds known to the politicians who want their votes to run the country on their behalf. This is the election year. This is the best time to get heard."

Voters want to vote, and want to vote for a person they admire, rather than be compelled to vote out of party loyalty, or on some other considerations. Voters must create their own choice. If political parties offer corrupt candidates, people will put up their own clean candidates. If we don't do that we'll continue to be the most corrupt

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RU comes to halt amid strike for just probe into killing

Police yesterday arrested a suspect in the murder of Rajshahi University (RU) teacher Taher Ahmed as the teachers and students observed a strike demanding a proper investigation into the killing and security on campus.

Nazmul of Meherchandi area in the city was arrested at his house following a statement of Jahangir, a guard of Taher's house in the teacher's quarters.

Police said they have identified a group of five to be the killers, but they have yet to be sure about the motive for the killing.

Jahangir was arrested with a bloodstained pillow and bedcover hours after Taher's body was spotted inside a sewer behind his house early Friday.

A police official said it is too early to reach a conclusion about the murder.

"The investigation so far

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LONG MARCH

Govt vows to thwart bid to create 'unrest'

BSS, Dhaka

The government has announced that it would resist any attempt of creating law and order situation to protect public interest and property.

In a press note issued late Friday night, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the government has come to know that a few political parties have announced a programme of 'long march' towards Dhaka.

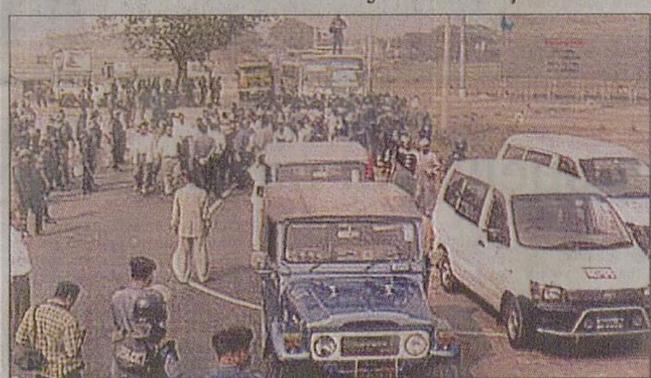
To implement the programme, the leaders and the activists of various tiers of those parties have been delivering provocative speeches and making announcement of Dhaka siege in the name of long march at different places of the country, it said.

Such activities will tarnish goodwill and image of Bangladesh

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Thousands ready to enter Dhaka defying massive crackdown

Over 10,000 arrested so far; transports obstructed



Vehicles carrying marchers to Dhaka face roadblocks on the bypass at Mashkanda in Mymensingh yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Defying an all-out government crackdown on marchers, tens of thousands of opposition activists from across the country yesterday merged around the capital that saw over 5,000 people arrested off the streets.

Countrywide since Wednesday the police have detained at least 10,000 people, mostly Awami League (AL) leaders and activists but also many innocent people.

With the government and the AL-led 14-party opposition combine apparently heading for a face-off, many fear violent clashes today at the entries to the city and inside, where about 1,200 people were arrested yesterday pushing the

number of arrests in the last four days to the tune of 5,000.

Violence has already erupted in the city, with two passenger buses set on fire allegedly by opposition activists. One was set ablaze on Bangabandhu Avenue at about 6:25pm and the other in Motijheel after half an hour, but no casualty was reported.

The government, which termed the demonstration illegal, deployed a large number of law enforcers at the entries to the capital to prevent the demonstrators from entering it. The government last night also mobilised many a contingent of law enforcers from the adjacent districts to Dhaka.

But, the streams of marchers

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Govt suffering from 'people-phobia'

Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As part of all-out measures to foil the 14-party opposition alliance's long march towards the capital tomorrow, "people-phobia affected" BNP-Jamaat alliance government is arresting and torturing the opposition workers and common people, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

Addressing a press conference at her Dhanmondi office, Sheikh Hasina, who is also president of Awami League, said the result of interfering with the people's show-down will go in favour of the opposition.

The government has arrested several thousand their workers along with a large number of innocent people without any justifiable

reasons in last three days, Hasina said, adding that the ruling coalition is using the police and civil administration as well as their cadres to repress the opposition men.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Same technique, different excuses

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The government is applying the same tool of blanket arrest, which it used twice in 2004, this time to block the opposition long march towards Dhaka.

Although the long march has not disrupted law and order or hampered public life, the government, in a press note on Friday, termed it 'illegal'.

While cracking down on the opposition leaders and activists ahead of an opposition programme in 2004 the government said there was a 'conspiracy' against the country. Last year the government sponsored a transport strike to foil another opposition

1,000 feared lost on doomed Egypt ferry

AFF, Safage

More than 24 hours after the Panamanian-flagged Al-Salam Boccaccio 98 encountered difficulties, the chances of finding more survivors were dwindling amid low night-time water temperatures and bad weather conditions.

Controversy has already emerged over the 36-year-old vessel's compliance with safety regulations and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak demanded an immediate investigation.

"Two hours after our departure from (the Saudi port of) Duba thick smoke started to come out of the engines," 34-year-old Egyptian Raafat al-Sayed told AFP.

He said the crew told passengers to go up onto the bridge so that crew members could extinguish the blaze as the ship started to list dangerously.

"But the fire continued for a long time, and they (the crew) kept on saying that they were getting it under control," said Kamel Mohammad Abdel Askari, 48, another Egyptian.

The survivors, being treated in the hospital at Hurghada on the Red Sea, said the Panamanian-flagged ferry continued on its voyage, listing to the port side, before suddenly going down in less than 10 minutes.

The passengers, mainly Egyptians working in Gulf countries or returning from the Muslim

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People's plights in arrest politics

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

A young and helpless housewife, Shilpi Akhter was sobbing alone at Ramna Police Station around half past midnight yesterday as she failed to release her husband detained under the ongoing blanket arrest.

She turned up at the police station at dead of night braving all risks of being a woman, as detectives detained her husband Saiful, 22, a rickshaw-puller, in Chankharpool around 9:00pm on February 3.

Shilpi does not know why the police have picked up her husband. Saiful is one of over 3,000 people detained in the city in the last four days ahead of and during the 14-party opposition's long march,

Regional cooperation a must among civil societies, media

South, Southeast Asian experts tell

The Daily Star discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regional cooperation among civil societies and mass media must be enhanced to resolve various problems in the South and Southeast Asian countries, top regional journalists, columnists, industrialists, economists and academics told a discussion organised by The Daily Star yesterday.

The experts also said despite the existence of confrontational politics and other odds Bangladesh has achieved remarkably in the fields of education, women's empowerment, industrialisation and overall economic growth.

Chief Executive Officer of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Rasheda K Choudhury told the meeting that over the years Bangladesh has achieved 'gender parity of 97 percent' in primary schools indicating that a 97 percent parity has been achieved between numbers of male and female students, while in secondary schools there are more female students enrolled than males. More than 19 million children are currently enrolled in primary schools with over half a million teachers, over 40 percent of whom are women. There are 700 NGOs working in the education sector.

She said despite a confrontational politics in the country, the achievements are reflective of an affirmative policy adopted by successive governments in education sector.

In addition to local industrialists, corporate personalities and experts the meeting was also attended by eminent Indian columnist Kuldip Nayar, Kunda Dixit, editor of Nepal Times, Raj Chengappa, managing editor of India Today, Pana Javira, president of the Nation Multimedia Group Public Co Ltd that owns The Daily Nation in Bangkok, N Ram,

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