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### Shahabuddin, Gayoom talk issues of mutual interest

## Dhaka to uphold SAARC spirit

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and the visiting President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom on Friday discussed matters of bilateral interest with an emphasis on strengthening the SAARC spirit to the benefit of the peoples of the South Asian region, report agencies.

Welcoming President Gayoom the Acting President yesterday reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment of best efforts to lead the SAARC to its cherished goal of promoting the socio-economic condition of more than one billion

people of the region. Justice Shahabuddin reiterated the country's conviction on seven-nation regional forum mooted by Dhaka 10 years ago, when the visiting President Gayoom called on him at Bangabhaban last night.

Justice Shahabuddin said the SAARC was mooted by late President Ziaur Rahman and the concept was gradually turned into a reality for the well being of the people of the region. He also said that since the association was mooted and formed in Bangladesh, it is natural that it would continue to keep interest in its overall

success.

President Gayoom, who shared the views of Justice Shahabuddin, said that he would do his best for the success of the association for the greater interest of the peoples of the seven countries of South Asian region.

Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman, Minister in Waiting Barrister Najmul Huda and Foreign Secretary Abul Ahsan were present during the call on.

The Maldives side was attended by Minister of State for Presidential affairs Abdul See Page 10 Col. 3



Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom being received by Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Zia International Airport Friday. — Star photo

## Select body yet to iron out differences

By Mostafa Kamal Majumder

The parliamentary select committee on constitution amendment bills is yet to iron out the differences between the government and the opposition over questions like floor crossing, election of President and appointment of non-MP ministers.

Meanwhile, the time frame given to committee to complete its work is already over. It has to submit its report to the House tomorrow (Sunday) if the time limit is not further extended. The committee, formed on July 9 was given four extra days on July 14 to complete its work.

It is gathered that the Awami League members in the committee, are opposed to the stand taken by BNP members on floor crossing. They say the provision made in the 1972 Constitution against floor crossing is adequate. After long discussion the AL mem-

bers are learnt to have said they would consider the proposal to make provision against formation of groups within a party in Parliament, but in that case the provision in the BNP bill would have to be reconstructed. BNP members who at one stage stated that they would stick to their stand gave the indication that they were ready to drop the proposal to disqualify a member, vacating his seat for crossing floor, for five years. AL members reportedly said they would discuss it at their Working Committee.

On the question of conducting the election of the President members of the two parties have stuck to their own stands. BNP members want the Speaker to conduct the election, because without this arrangement it would not be possible to determine floor crossing in respect of election See Page 10 Col. 8

## \$ 100m World Bank scheme to cut female dropout rate

The World Bank is considering a 100 million US dollar project to check drop-out of female students in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

More than six lakh secondary level (class six to ten) girl students in backward areas will be given scholarships and stipends under the programme, it was officially learnt.

A total of 120 backward upazilas will be covered under the project.

Apart from extending scholarships, other components of the project will be: development of entrepreneurship among girl students and improvement of physical infrastructures including latrines and tubewells in schools.

About 80 per cent of the total fund will, however, be spent for scholarship and stipend purposes.



Mohammedan striker Naquib (R) fails in front of the Bangkok Bank Sports Club goal in yesterday's opening match of the 10th Asian Club Cup football championship at the Dhaka Stadium. The match ended in a 1-1 draw. — Star photo

### Death toll rises to 27

## Flood engulfs more areas

By Staff Correspondent

Overnight rainfall almost all over the country deteriorated the overall flood situation Friday.

More areas of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Manikganj, Pabna and Bogra districts went under water while situation remained unchanged in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Sherpur, Sirajganj, Madaripur, Tangail, Netrakona and Faridpur districts. Waters receded slightly in Jamalpur district.

The death toll shot up to 27 with 10 reported from Kurigram and 2 from Gaibandha. The 10 deaths in Kurigram were during the last few days of flooding, but reported Friday.

The Flood Forecasting and

Warning Centre in the capital Friday said more areas in Jamalpur, Sherpur, Netrakona, Mymensingh and Tangail might go under water. The centre, however, hoped the situation might improve slowly in parts of the Brahmaputra basin.

At least 3.35 lakh people have remained marooned, over 30 lakh affected and countless others rendered homeless by monsoon flood.

The two-weeks of flooding has turned vast landscape in the 13 districts into sheets of waters pushing the weary and hapless people to embankments, railway trace and other higher places, huddling in dirt and threatened with diarrhoeal

diseases. Paucity of drinking water have posed serious problem to them, who have no alternative but to depend on doles of relief from government or by charity which is scarce.

Meanwhile, rains and upstream waters have inundated areas of Bhasantak, Kalshi, Adabor and Kalyanpur anew and more areas of Kamrangirchar, Jatrabari, Badda, Gulshan, Manikganj, Mohakhali, Rampura and Mirpur in and around Dhaka city. People, mainly destitutes have been forced to leave homes and take shelter in public places like Kamalapur railway station and footpaths. See Page 10 Col. 6

### VAT system a realistic step: NBR

The National Board of Revenue Friday night said that the newly introduced VAT system was a realistic and inevitable step taken by the present democratic government towards building a self-reliant economy, reports BSS.

The Board said in a press release that reform of the tax system was essential for accelerating the development of the country and that was why the VAT system was introduced.

The NBR said the misunderstanding about the VAT system had now been considerably removed and most of the manufacturers and importers had already registered themselves under the new system and were paying the VAT as per the rules. See Page 10 Col. 1

## MSC rue missed chances

Sports Reporter

Local hopes ebbed a little when Dhaka Mohammedan Sporting Club allowed Thai champions Bangkok Bank Club to wrest a vital point from them in the opening tie of the 10th Asian Club Cup football championship which kicked

off at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday afternoon. Mohammedan Sporting who started with a bang, making several menacing sorties into the Thai territory within minutes of the kick-off, and enjoyed a better share of the ex-

changes for much of the proceedings, eventually ran out of steam and saw their slender lead being neutralized by the Bangkok bankers who had to toil extra hard on a heavy, slushy outfield several parts of See Page 10 Col. 3

## DUCSU poll date may be shifted

By DU Correspondent

The date of elections to the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) and the hall students unions is likely to be shifted.

Leaders of various student organisations, including BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Awami League-backed Chhatra League (BCL) called on Vice-Chancellor Prof. Moniruzzaman Mia Friday to pursue him to this effect. The student leaders argued in favour of their decision that the campus situation was not congenial at present for holding elections. Moreover, they

could not take adequate preparations for the elections due to shortage of time, they told the Vice-Chancellor.

They also urged the Vice-Chancellor to consider the Syndicate decision of June 17, which barred the irregular students from contesting the DUCSU polls.

The student leaders also submitted an application to the Vice-Chancellor requesting him to shift the date of DUCSU polls. It was signed by, among others, leaders of BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Awami League-backed

Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A), JSD (Inu)-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (N-S), BKSAL-backed Jatiya Chhatra League and CPB-backed Bangladesh Chhatra Union.

The Vice-Chancellor agreed to the proposal of the student leaders saying, if all student organisations wanted to shift the date of DUCSU elections he had nothing to disagree.

Meanwhile, as the news spread among the campus students, some of the leading See Page 10 Col. 1

### Priority to agri reform, cottage industries needed

By Shahiduzzaman Khan

An appropriate agrarian reform and promotion of small and cottage industries must be given priority in the allocation of resources and policy support in Bangladesh.

This was observed by Dr Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, an eminent economist in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on Friday. Dr Ahmad heads Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad and Bangladesh Society of Economists, both See Page 10 Col. 1

## Slovenia wins de facto independence

BELGRADE, July 19: The breakaway Yugoslav republic of Slovenia has won de facto independence with the Yugoslav presidency's decision to pull federal troops out of Slovenian territory within three months, observers said today, reports AFP.

declared its independence on the same day as Slovenia, on June 25.

"For Slovenia, the path to independence has been eased," Slovenia's member of the presidency, Janez Drnovsek said, hailing the decision as "historic" and the first step towards the settlement of the Yugoslav crisis.

The Croatian government criticised Slovenia today for its "unilateral" move to obtain the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from its territory and warned that Croatia faced increased violence.

Government spokesman Marko Nobilo said that "Croatia was unhappy with the decision to withdraw the Yugoslav army from Slovenia," adding that Croatia "favors a comprehensive solution applicable to all the republics."

He said that Croatia now risks clashes on its territory between republican and federal forces which would be "much bloodier" than the fighting between Yugoslav and Slovenian forces which left 70 dead.

He said that the "unilateral move" placed Serbia "in a

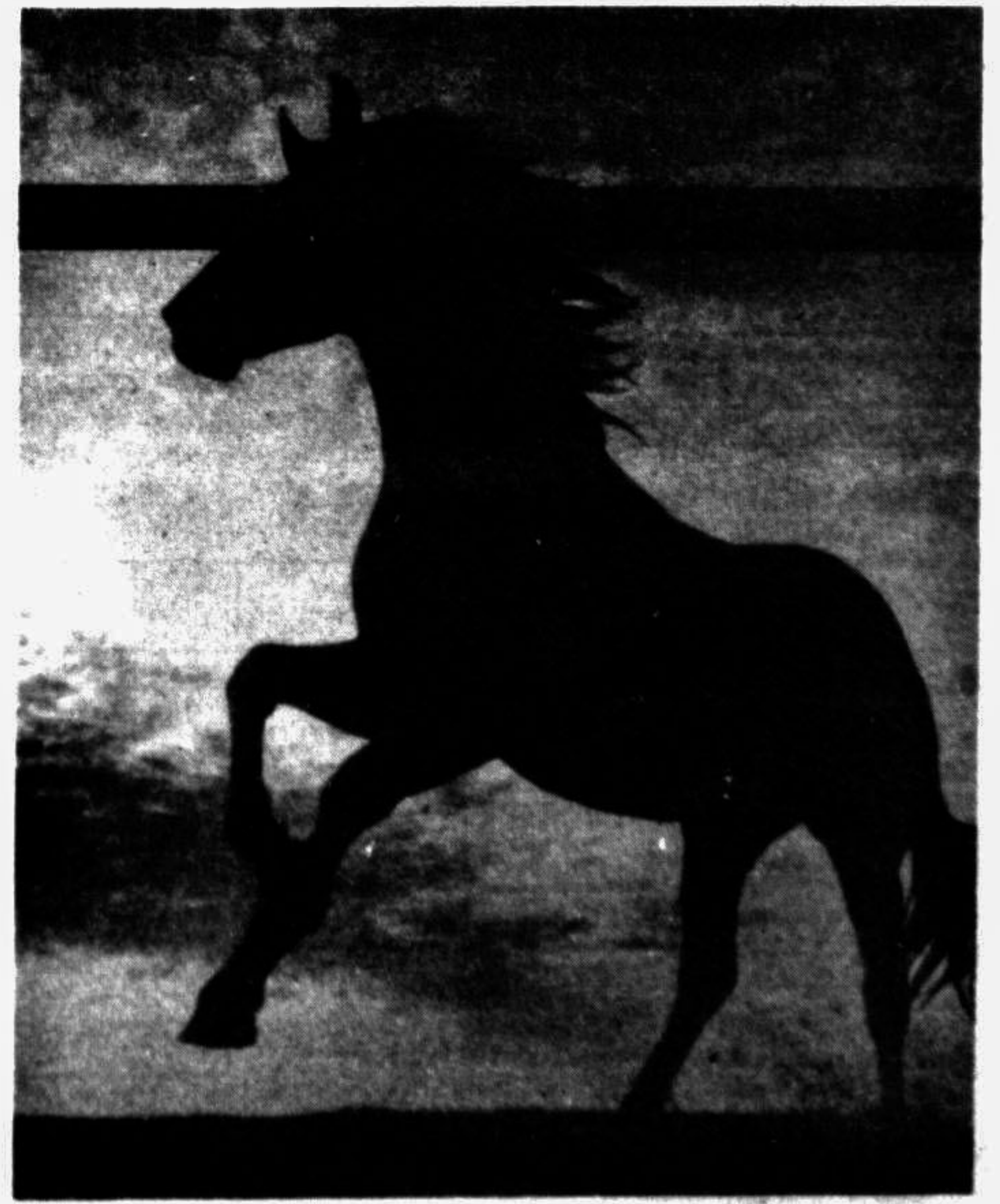
favourable position permitting it to concentrate troops in zones inhabited by Serbs."

Croatia has a large ethnic Serbian population and ethnic Serbian militia have repeatedly clashed with Croatian forces over the past several months.

Nobilo also described Thursday's decision by the ecological federal presidency as being "obviously a backroom deal."

Ranko Salaj, adviser to Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, criticised Slovenia for "going it alone." Related story on Page 5

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