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NEWS BRIEFS

Dhaka to receive \$200m from ADB

Bangladesh will receive 145.607 million SDR (about 200 million US dollars) from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) under an agreement signed in Manila yesterday according to a message received in Dhaka last night. A project agreement for the Jamuna Bridge Project was also signed between ADB and the Bangladesh government in Manila, reports BSS.

Film on life of Sheikh Mujib

A local company will produce a three-part film on the life of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was the chief guest at the inaugural function of the first part of the film, 'The Childhood of Sheikh Mujib', at Tungipara Thursday on the occasion of his 74th birth anniversary. The film made by Ruma Pictures was based on a book written by journalist Baby Moudud, reports UNB.

EC camp in Magura Circuit House

The Magura Circuit House will be considered as camp office of the Election Commission for the by-election to the Magura-2 constituency, according to an Election Commission press release. The Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mohammad Abdul Rouf, secretary of the Election Commission secretariat A Z M Shamsul Alam, Joint Secretary S M Zakaria and high officials will go to Magura today in connection with the coming by-election, reports BSS.

Keen race in Magura by-polls predicted

Star Report

Electioneering for the Magura Two parliamentary by-election closed at midnight last night, 48 hours ahead of Sunday's polling. The leaders and candidates of almost all the major parties who have been devoting their energies for mustering support among the voters of this tiny, sleepy south-western district — about 125 miles from the capital — yesterday worked overtime to end their respective campaigns with a flourish. Five candidates, including those of the ruling BNP, the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-i-Islam, are contesting the Jatiya Sangsad seat which fell vacant upon the

death of Awami League legislator Advocate Asaduzzaman late last year. The constituency encompasses two thanas — Shalikhah and Mohammadpur — along with four unions of Magura Sadar. Our staff correspondent reported from Magura last night that leaders of the two main protagonists — the BNP and the AL — worked ceaselessly until the last minute to rally support for their candidates. Both BNP chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her Awami League rival Sheikh Hasina toured the constituency extensively, each addressing at least a dozen public and roadside gatherings.

Accompanied by their nominees and top party colleagues, both Khaleda and Hasina also went from door to door soliciting precious votes from the people of the area.

Likewise, leaders of the Jatiya Party including acting party chief Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and the Secretary General of the Jamaat-i-Islami Maulana Matlur Rahman Nizami, who have been in Magura for the past few days, had very busy schedules yesterday. The Jatiya Party has nominated Nital Roy Chowdhury, a minister during the Ershad regime.

During her extensive tour of

Elect BNP nominee for development: PM

MOHAMMADPUR (Magura), Mar 18: Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today urged the people to vote for the BNP nominee in the coming parliamentary by-election here for the sake of democracy, development and production, reports BSS.

"Strengthen the hands of the BNP for carrying forward the development process and building a glorious Bangladesh in future," she appealed to the voters during her electioneering.

Referring to exemption of about Taka 2500 crore agricultural loans, waiving of tax up to 25 bighas of agricultural land, withdrawal of certificate cases filed against the peasants, reduction of the prices of fertilizer, the Prime Minister said her government has been implementing the pre-election pledges one by one.

She said the country has now attained self-sufficiency in food production due to planned and timely measures of her government.

Begum Zia said her government was contemplating to provide more facilities to the farmers to help them boost agricultural output. The BNP chairperson, who continued her election tour of the Magura-2 constituency for the second day today ad-

ressed scores of public meetings and way-side rallies and carried out direct mass-contact campaign in different parts of Mohammadpur thana.

The parliamentary seat of Magura-2, covering Mohammadpur and Shalikhah thanas and four unions of Magura Sadar thana, fell vacant following the death of Awami League MP Asaduzzaman.

The BNP Chairperson began her marathon campaign in the morning from Mohammadpur thana and continued it till night.

She carried out massive campaign in the villages under Shalikhah thana yesterday to seek votes for Kazi Salimul Huq alias Kazi Kanai, the BNP nominee.

Kazi Salimul Huq, a leading industrialist of the country and an MBA (Masters of Business Administration), is contesting with BNP ticket in the March 20 by-election.

During her extensive tour of Mohammadpur thana, Begum Zia addressed a series of rallies at different places including the Banagram High School field, Baraballidia ground, Naohata High School field, Rajabazar High School field, Binodpur High School field, Digha School field and Babukhali Government High School field.

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SAARC finance, planning ministers to meet in Dhaka in July

Secretary General of the SAARC Y K Silwal yesterday said that the Finance and Planning ministers of the SAARC countries would meet in Dhaka during the first half of July, this year, to discuss issues relating to greater interactions among the member states in economic areas, reports BSS.

The meeting will take place before the next meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers in Dhaka, he told newsmen on arrival in Dhaka.

The last session of the SAARC Council of Ministers in Dhaka had decided that a meeting of the Finance and Planning ministers of the SAARC nations and another meeting of the council of ministers would take place in Bangladesh before the next summit in India by the end of this year.

The SAARC Secretary General flew in Dhaka on a two-day visit essentially to attend the first-ever conference of the press clubs of South Asian countries. He was received at the airport by Hasan Sharif and Shaikat Mahmood, President and General Secretary respectively of the National Press Club, members of the executive committee of

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A good number of railway carriages worth crores of taka lying abandoned at the Kamalapur railway yard in the city.

— Star photo

Solarz not interested to serve as envoy to India

WASHINGTON, Mar 18: Former Congressman Stephen Solarz Thursday withdrew from consideration for the post of US Ambassador to India, the White House announced, reports Reuter.

A terse statement issued by White House Communications Director Mark Gearan said Solarz had informed Vice President Al Gore Wednesday that he was no longer interested in the job. It gave no reason for his decision.

"The President values Mr Solarz's intellect, energy and expertise and his service to the nation over the last two decades," the statement said.

It said President Clinton had asked Solarz, a New York Democrat who lost his seat in the House of Representatives in 1992 after becoming entangled in the house check-raising scandal, to serve as his special representative on Sudan.

"Mr Solarz agreed to consider the request," the statement said.

US showing signs of rapprochement with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Mar 18: Washington is showing signs of rapprochement with Islamabad in talks on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and is reconsidering a ban on military sales to Pakistan, the foreign ministry said, reports AFP.

The talks have raised concern in New Delhi that closer relations between Washington and Islamabad could lead to an upset of the regional power equation.

A Pakistani Foreign Ministry official said here Thursday that Washington and Islamabad were engaged in "deep dialogue" on the subject of nuclear non-proliferation, a priority of US foreign policy in the region.

Neither Pakistan nor traditional rival India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1947, are signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and both suspect the other of developing atomic weapons.

The ongoing US-Pakistan talks coincide with reports of the willingness of the US administration to partially lift a ban on military and economic aid to Pakistan which was imposed in October 1990 following fears that Islamabad had embarked on a nuclear weapons programme.

"The Spanish seductress was dramatically linked to the

Solo exhibition of Kalidas begins

By Staff Correspondent
The 51st solo art exhibition of Kalidas Karmakar began at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium yesterday.

The ten-day exhibition was inaugurated by Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman. Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shiego Takenaka was present on the occasion as special guest.

Earlier Mobarak Hossain Khan, Director General of the Shilpakala Academy presided a discussion on the works of Kalidas.

The exhibition will remain open for the visitors everyday from 2 pm to 7 pm till March 27. Kalidas, who graduated in Fine Arts in 1969 from the Government College of Arts and Crafts of Calcutta has won many international awards and fellowships.

Left Democratic Front next month likely

By Nurul Kabir

The Left-leaning parties of the country have almost completed their preparations for floating a political front sometime next month.

Eight leftist parties had agreed in principle, a year ago, to form a broad-based alliance with a view to presenting an alternative political and economic programme, different from those pursued by the major political parties of the country.

The Left leaders have already decided to name their alliance as the 'Left Democratic Front' and have formulated a 17-point political programme as well as a 14-point economic agenda for the new alliance.

The eight parties are the Workers' Party of Bangladesh, the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal led by Hasanul Huq Inu, the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal led by Khalequzzaman, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal led by AFM Mahbubul Huq, the Oikya Prokria, the Samik Krishak Samajbadi Dal and the Samaybadi Dal.

The leaders of the proposed alliance are scheduled to meet on the 30th of this month to fix a date for formal announcement of their 'Left Democratic Front (LDF)'.

According to the draft political programme of the LDF,

they will struggle for repeal of all the constitutional amendments that had legitimised the military regimes of the past and for restoring the provision of secularism in the constitution.

The draft programme also says the LDF would fight for imposing a ban on religion-based politics and demand punishment of the 'war criminals,' including Golam Azam.

The political programme includes the demands for repeal of all "discriminatory laws" including the Vested Property Law, complete separation of the judiciary from the executive, military training for all able-bodied male and female citizens, constitutional recognition to the ethnic minorities and measures to protect their culture.

The programme, calls for holding national elections under a care-taker government, providing the voters with identity cards and declaring the bank loan defaulters ineligible for contesting polls.

Under the 14-point economic programme, the LDF will work for building a self-reliant economy through strict control over the multinational corporations, boosting production in the industrial and agricultural sectors, introducing radical land reforms for distribution.

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Environmentalists plan to sue FAP authorities

Star Report

The Flood Action Plan (FAP) is going to face a major legal challenge next week as some environmentalists plan to sue the authorities for alleged malpractices involving the land acquisition procedure.

The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) is thinking of serving a legal notice on the FAP authorities on behalf of the people living in the FAP-20 project areas in Tangail district seeking justice.

Dr Mohiuddin Farooque, Secretary General of BELA, said his organisation was going for legal action on complaints from some aggrieved residents of the Tangail Compartmentalization Pilot Project (CPP) under FAP-20.

The people had alleged that the authorities were flouting rules regarding acquisition of land and compensation for the affected people, he said.

"We have already gathered some evidence against the

FAP-20 authorities," Farooque said.

The Tangail CPP is an experimental flood control project the objective of which is to enclose the 13169-hectare area of the district with embankments for evolving a viable water management technique.

The compartmentalized project, when completed, would be put to operation for the next two years for various studies on flood control and drainage, food production, fisheries and environmental impact.

If found favourable, the 94,00,000-US dollars project, co-funded by Germany and the Netherlands, would be replicated all over the country.

The project is one of the 26 components of the FAP which aims at charting an integrated national water management plan for the country by permanently resolving the complexities of the floods.

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Solution to Farakka issue soon, hopes Indian minister

NEW DELHI, Mar 18: The Indian government is "inching" towards a solution with Bangladesh on Farakka issue but it could not give any timeframe for a solution at this juncture. Water Resources Minister VC Shukla informed the Rajya Sabha today, reports PTI.

Replying to supplementaries during question hour that the government was cautious in tackling the issue as it did not want anything unsavoury to happen to otherwise friendly relations between the two countries.

He said Bangladesh had shown "patience and accommodation" so far in dealing with the issue and "I hope a solution would be found soon" for the mutual benefit of both the countries.

He assured that "while finding a solution to the issue, India's long-term interest would be kept in mind."

The main point of dispute was sharing of Farakka water in such a manner that it did not lead to shortage situation in either country.

He also said the issue should not be internationalised as it would create further delay.

SAARC Press Clubs' Confce begins in city today

The two-day South Asian Press Clubs' Conference, first of its kind, begins in Dhaka today at the Osmani Memorial Hall, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is also the SAARC Chairperson, will inaugurate the conference, being organised by the Jatiya Press Club.

SAARC Secretary General YK Silwal, will attend the function as special guest.

Delegates including press club officials and senior journalists from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka arrived in Dhaka yesterday. The president, general secretary, senior members of the managing committee and officials from respective missions received the delegates at the Zia International Airport.

The press delegation from Pakistan arrived Thursday to attend the conference.

Sagir on remand for three more days

By Staff Correspondent

The main suspect in the police sergeant murder case — Sagir Ahmed alias Liton — was taken on police remand for three more days yesterday.

Another suspect of the murder — Ahmed Hossain alias Ahmed — was also further remanded to the Detective Branch office at Minto Road for two days yesterday.

Both the suspects were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate yesterday.

A sergeant of Kotwali Police Station Abu Nasim Mohammad Hasanul Farhat was killed on March 5 during a bloody clash between two factions of students on the Jagannath University campus.

Sagir was arrested from Dhanmondi area on March 10 while Ahmed was arrested from the city's Patuati area on March 11.

Muslims, Croats sign accord on federation

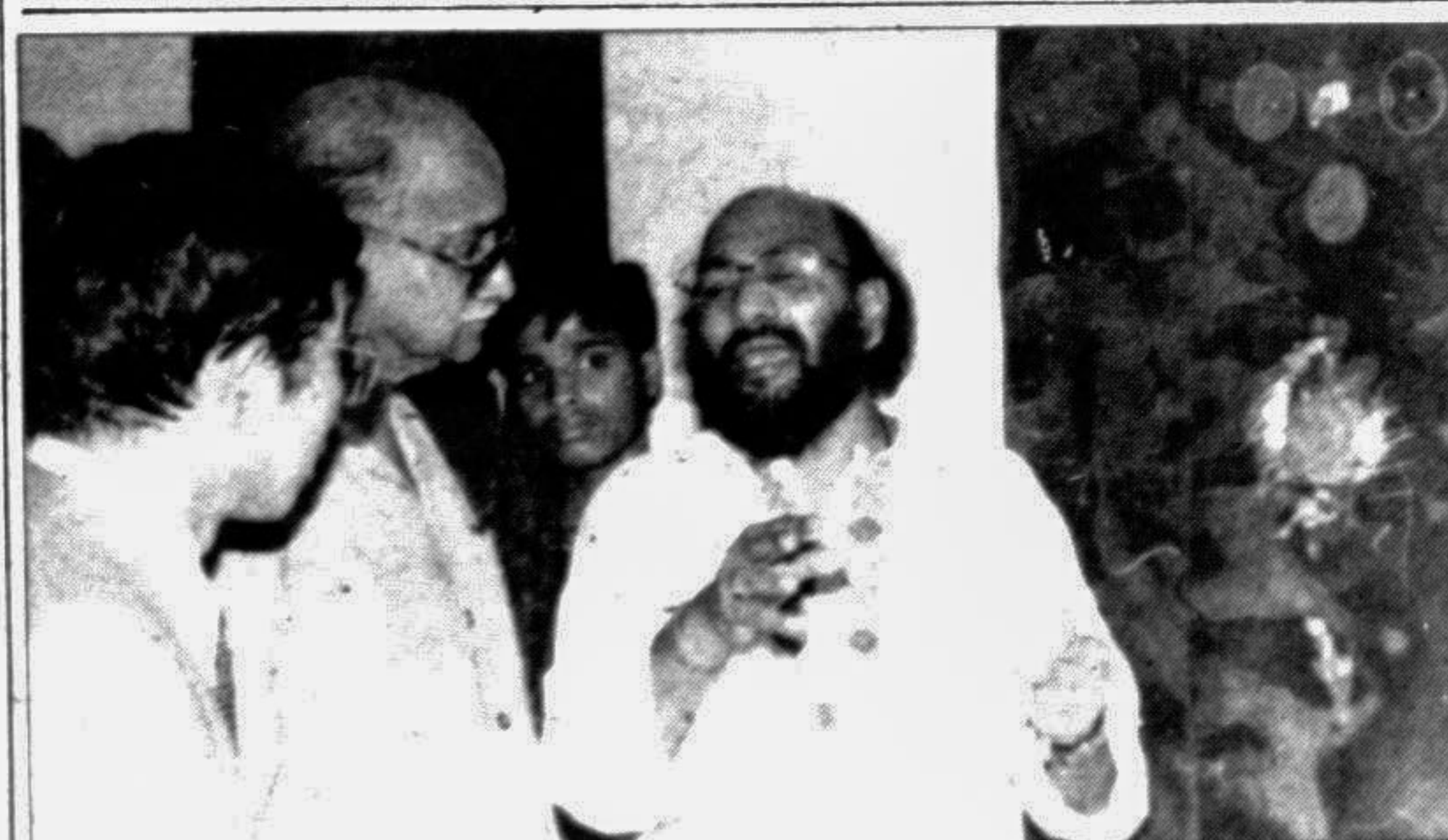
WASHINGTON, Mar 18: Bosnian Muslims and Croats signed documents today creating a federation on the non-Serb remains of Bosnia and linking that with Croatia in what could be a major step toward peace in the war-shattered area, reports Reuter.

"We have come to bear witness to a moment of hope. For 33 months the flames of war have raged through the nations of the former Yugoslavia," President Clinton said in presiding over the signing ceremony.

"By signing these agreements today, the Bosnian and Croatian leaders have acted to turn back those flames and to begin the difficult process of reconciliation."

The documents create an

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Painter Kalidas Karmakar (R) explaining his works to Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman and Japanese Ambassador in Bangladesh Shiego Takenaka at the Shilpakala Academy Auditorium in the city yesterday.

— Star photo