

## Rupsha Bridge project Accord signed for consultancy

**BSS, Dhaka**  
An agreement was signed yesterday between the government of Bangladesh and the Pacific Consultant International (PCI) of Japan for providing consultancy service to construct the Rupsha Bridge at Khulna.

The signing ceremony, held at the Sarak Bhaban here, was witnessed by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain MP.

The minister advised all concerned to properly discharge their responsibilities during the construction of the bridge.

The ceremony was also addressed by Communications Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat as special guest.

Chief Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department Md. Fazlul Haque and PCI president Shota Morita signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

The 1,360-meter-long bridge, with a 640-meter main section and a 720-meter-long approach viaduct, will be built at a cost of about Taka 490.6 crore.

Taka 29.84 crore will be spent as consultancy service for supervision of the bridge construction. The bridge will be completed by three and a half years with financial assistance from Japan.

The long cherished dream of the people of the south-western Khulna city will be fulfilled after completion of the bridge. It will connect the country's second largest seaport Mongla and ensure safe passage of cargo transports.

Representative of Japan Bank for International Cooperation Hamada, Project Director of the bridge Mohammad Mominul Haque and other officials concerned were present on the occasion.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated a new building of the Central Police Hospital at Rajarbagh yesterday.

## Mar 30 grand rally PM consults with leaders

**UNB, Dhaka**  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday consulted with presidents and secretaries of Awami League of Dhaka district, adjacent districts and city committees about the means of making the March 30 grand rally at Parade Ground a success.

Held at Ganabhaban, the meeting was also attended by the Awami League MPs from Dhaka city and the leaders of the party's front organisations.

The ruling party said the rally would be organised to mark the victory of the people in establishing their right to vote and food and observe the fall of Khaleda Zia's government on March 30, 1996 after holding a voter-less election on February 15, 1996.e government by March 30 for holding general elections.

## PM: Transfer of power

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About Khaleda's desire to unseat the government at any cost, the prime minister said, "We are ready to see how they oust us from power."

Sheikh Hasina said it was BNP government that was ousted from power for vote rigging in the February 15 polls. She said there has been no charges of vote rigging against the present government.

The prime minister said hartal would cause sufferings to the common people, particularly the police personnel on duty. In this connection, she mentioned the killing of a policeman inside a mosque during hartal. Sheikh Hasina called upon the opposition leader to show respect to people's verdict and take part in elections. "Let us repose our confidence in the people and accept their verdict in the polls."

The prime minister reminded all that everyone should show respect to democracy and that nobody would be allowed to conspire

## Bangabandhu

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his client in different places like the night parade spot, radio station and the Bangabandhu but none of the witnesses' testimonies on the presence of his client were corroborated by others as "required by the law."

Advocate Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, lawyer for Captain Majed, defended his fugitive client saying he could not be convicted only for his presence at the night parade on August 14, 1975 since he was not seen by any witnesses at any of the alleged places of conspiracy like the BARD of Comilla or Khandoker Mushtaque's village home.

Responding to a question from the court, Advocate Mizan said Majed's presence at the night parade despite being a retired officer was contrary to the Army Act and therefore he could be tried in a military court for violation of army rules.

Both the judges of the previous bench unanimously sentenced Majed to death but were divided on the question of charges in their split judgement causing the matter to be referred to the third judge along with the matters of five others, acquitted by Justice Amin and sentenced by Justice Haque.

The prosecution side, led by senior advocate Serajul Haq, ended their submission on the 16th day of the hearing in the court of Justice Fazlul Karim on Thursday.

## SSC exams 1381 more expelled

**UNB, Dhaka**  
Some 1381 SSC examinees and six invigilators were expelled from different centres across the country during yesterday's Mathematics examination.

According to information available from 10 districts under Dhaka Board, some 856 examinees were expelled for adopting unfair means.

In Chittagong Board, 288 SSC examinees and five teachers and in Barisal Board some 237 examinees and one teacher were expelled.

Information of other boards was not available till filing this report.

Another report from Kushtia adds: At least 20 people, including some examinees, were injured in a clash between police and people at a centre of SSC examination in Daulatpur upazila here yesterday.

Witnesses said the clash erupted at the local Girls High School where examinees of room number 3 were enjoying extra 20 minutes time during mathematics examination following directives of local Upazila Nirbahi Officer Anwar Hossain.

Locals alleged that some of the examinees of the very room were relatives of local ruling party leaders.

The incident angered the other examinees and outsiders who attacked the centre with brickbats.

Police charged batons, fired shots in the air and lobbed 10 tear-gas shells to bring the situation under control.

Police also rounded up scores of people from the spot.

Of the injured, Ishaq, 35, and Abdullah, 16, were admitted to local upazila health complex.

During the trouble some answer scripts were reportedly missing.

## Khaleda meets key party leaders

**UNB, Dhaka**  
Opposition leader Khaleda Zia yesterday had a meeting with key BNP leaders who dominate city politics.

They also discussed organisational strength to carry out next tougher course of action against the government.

Issues of 3-day hartal from April 1, organisational strength and strategy to activate party leaders and workers came up for discussion at the meeting at Khaleda's Banani secretariat at 8 pm, meeting sources said.

The BNP-led four-party alliance has given the government until March 30 to resign to make way for general elections, failing which the April 1-3 non-stop countrywide hartal will be enforced.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, BNP Joint Secretary General Mirza Abbas, city BNP president Sadeq Hossain Khoka, General Secretary Abdus Salam, Salahuddin

## Rift in alliance

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activists are annoyed at the latest activities of Raushan Ershad and GM Kader and they do not want to join hands with the ruling Awami League," he said seeking anonymity.

"Another JP will be formed and it will be with the alliance if Ershad and his followers finally quit and join hands with the ruling party. The process has already started and will take a final shape in the next couple of days," he added.

JP (Ershad) is going to join parliament session in the name of seeking division vote to protect its election symbol "plough".

J P leaders loyal to dissident party Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manzur have already met BNP chief Khaleda Zia and told her they would form a 'separate JP' if

## Rehana

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since we have lost everything, including our father, mother three brothers and some nearest relatives. I have no political ambition, but it is sure that my sister and I will never deviate from the cause for which Bangladesh was born under the leadership of our great father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," she said.

## FBCCI concern

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government and subsequent challenge by the government have been pushing the country towards confrontation.

The business apex body deplored the hartal call for three consecutive days from April 1.

It said businesspeople have to pay bank interest and workers' salary as usual although hartals halt all business activities and disrupt production and export.

Previous instances showed farmers also incur losses as hartals affect transportation and marketing of farm produce.

Besides, frequent hartal calls are affecting Bangladesh's image abroad and discouraging both domestic and foreign investments, the FBCCI leaders said.

FBCCI president Yussuf Abdullah Harun, who chaired the meeting, told UNB that if situation demands, his Federation may call a general body meeting next month to take stock of the whole situation and decide their own course.

## JP lawmakers meet Ershad

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Commission to ensure our party's election symbol, plough."

Ershad would go to the parliament only when he is granted bail, she said, adding that her husband would not go to the JS on parole. She claimed that JP struck no deal with the government but was only going to the parliament to save the party symbol.

Raushan reiterated that the four-party alliance was intact and it would continue to be so. She added that JP would not participate in the parliamentary proceedings.

Prior to the meeting with Ershad, the JP lawmakers met Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury in the morning. The Speaker asked them to join the parliament session to prove their majority. He informed them that the parliament was not the authority to give them any party symbol.

The Speaker further said that he was not officially informed that Ershad was JP's parliamentary party leader. To claim majority, the pro-Ershad MPs must come to the parliament, raise the question on the floor and prove their majority, he said.

Following the JP split into Ershad-Manzur and Mizan-Monju factions, both groups have claimed rights over the plough symbol. The Election Commission, however, maintained that unless it was proved which

## Petrobangla

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could be harmful for the gas field's geological structure. They cited the example of the Bakhrabad gas field that had a reserve of 1.5 trillion cubic feet of gas but it rapidly depleted due to overexploitation.

As Shell was insisting on supplying more gas, Petrobangla and Shell jointly invited an independent gas reservoir expert from Canada last year. The expert examined Sangu field and recommended late last year that the field could safely produce up to 250mmcf/d gas from four wells. Sources said it was once tested that Sangu can supply up to 295mmcf/d.

Shell remains worried about payment by Petrobangla. Recently Shell executives met the finance minister expressing their concerns. While assuring that the payments would be cleared soon, the minister observed that the backlog of bills were created due to financial mismanagement of Petrobangla's affiliates like Titas.

## AL workers

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another public function at Suhrawardy Udyan on the following day.

Exchange of ultimatum between the BNP-led opposition alliance and the ruling party has however put no brakes on the pre-electioneering district tour programme by senior party leaders.

Split into 23 groups, more than a hundred senior party leaders including cabinet minister toured most of the AL's 70 organisational districts over the last two weeks to project 'success' of the government achieved over the last four years and nine months.

Earlier last month, publicity secretaries of the party units in districts were summoned to Dhaka to have a counseling session with SAMS Kibria, Coordinator of the AL Election Steering Committee and Finance Minister.

Kibria briefed them about the campaign strategy for the ensuing general election. But, fast changing political scenario in the capital over the issue of early polls is giving the party workers across the country mixed signal, said sources.

## Kofi Annan's re-election

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during a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Singapore. But no campaign was mounted for a single nominee.

"There was a strong feeling that the Asian group as a whole should endorse his candidature for re-election on the assumption that when he completes his second term, that the next secretary-general would be an Asian," Ahmad told reporters.

Noting Asia has not fielded a secretary-general for 20 years, Ahmad said, "So it is legitimate for the Asians to expect that when Secretary-General Kofi Annan completes his term, it will be an Asian."

The last UN secretary-general

## Bangladesh battery

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Manufacturers Association (BABMA) Niaz Rahim told The Daily Star yesterday that although the Indian government has spared Bangladesh from the investigation and imposition of anti-dumping duty on battery export, it is going ahead with the petition as far as Japan, South Korea and China are concerned.

Bangladeshi manufacturers should not be included in the notification along with these three non-SAPTA countries as "we are exporting lead acid batteries to India under the preferential tariff allowed by India under SAPTA," he said.

Meanwhile, President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Latifur Rahman in a letter to the commerce and industries ministries has congratulated both the ministers for their personal initiatives in resolving the problem.

"It signifies what can be achieved when the government and the private sector work in unison to achieve trade-related objectives in the larger interest of the nation," said Rahman in the letter.

## Babul murder

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name was not mentioned. But now he (Mostafa) has been implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically, the lawyers said.

Moreover, the court rejected the naraaj petitions, submitted earlier by the complainant of the case. So the lawyers prayed for bail.

In the second petition, the lawyers said Mostafa has been suffering from heart disease. So the lawyers prayed for proper treatment of the accused in the jail.

After hearing both the sides, the court rejected the bail petition but granted the petition for treatment.

## 300 arrested

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A high official of KMP said BPCP and BCP are not at all followers of Marx, Lenin or Mao Tsetung, but terrorists exploited by Awami League and BNP for killing their opponents.

The official said Rashid, a ring-leader of BPCP's Khulna-Bagherhat base, is allegedly being harboured by a top leader of BNP, while Tapan, a ring-leader of the same party's Jessore-Sathkhira belt, is sheltered by the ruling party.

## Independence and National Day celebrated

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minister followed him. They stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of respect for the independence martyrs.

A smart contingent of three forces presented the armed salute and played the bugle at the memorial while the two leaders were placing wreaths.

From Savar the prime minister went to Bangabandhu Museum at 32 Dhanmondi, and placed wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sheikh Hasina also visited a military hardware display at the national parade ground.

Opposition leader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and other party leaders placed wreaths at the national memorial.

People from all walks of life streamed into the memorial premises throughout the day to show their respect for the martyrs.

Hasina formally inaugurated the Independence and National Day-2001 programme by hoisting national flag at 8.20 am and releasing a white pigeon and multi-coloured balloons amidst cheers from the gallery at Bangabandhu National Stadium.

She inspected the march past, took salute and witnessed the physical exercise as dozens of school children, juvenile organisations, boys scouts and girls guide participated in the march past and physical display portraying the spirit and events of 1971 Liberation War as well as Bengali culture.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a reception at Bangabhaban to mark the occasion.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, former Chief Justice Latifur Rahman, ministers, judges of the Supreme Court and High Court, MPs, freedom fighters, diplomats, politicians, academics, lawyers, journalists, and civil and military officials attended the function.

Government as well as different political parties and socio-cultural organisations chalked out elaborate programmes celebrating the independence anniversaries.

Special prayers were offered at all mosques, temples, churches and pagodas seeking divine blessings for the country and salvation of the martyrs.

Special meals were served

among the inmates of hospitals, jails, orphanages and vagrant centres.

Main thoroughfares of the capital were decorated with miniature national flags and colorful bunting while important government buildings were illuminated in the evening.

State-run Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television, privately owned Ekushey Television and local satellite channels broadcast special programmes on the day.

Bangladesh missions abroad also celebrated the day by chalking out different programmes highlighting the significance of the day when the Bengalees earned freedom from Pakistani subjugation in a long-drawn struggle starting off with the great Language Movement.

## BJP-Trinamool honeymoon seems over

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As BJP-Trinamool alliance limp, senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, deputed by Sonia, held talks with Mamata in Kolkata Sunday night for seat sharing in the West Bengal assembly polls. Congress has always been keen on seat sharing with Trinamool Congress and made repeated attempts to woo Mamata out of the BJP-led alliance. The Congress has demanded that Trinamool part ways with the BJP.

Kamal Nath himself told newsmen here Monday that he held talks with Mamata on Sunday after receiving an assurance from her that Trinamool would have no truck with BJP. Nath indicated that the talks between Congress and Trinamool on seat sharing would take some more time before a clear picture emerged. Congress sources did not rule out the possibil-

ity of a meeting between Mamata and Sonia Gandhi in the coming days.

But seat sharing between Congress and Trinamool is easier said than done, sources in both parties admit. Mamata has already announced the candidates of her party for 228 of the 294 seats in the West Bengal assembly and would have to pull out a number of them to accommodate Congress nominees, an exercise that could trigger strong resentment within the Trinamool fold.

Congress sources say the party would like to runs for 42 seats it has at present in the state assembly and get some of the 39 seats Trinamool has offered to the BJP under an agreement already worked out. Congress had 79 seats in state assembly after the previous elections in 1996, but a series of exodus

to Trinamool over the past few years saw the party's strength dwindle to 41.

Trinamool leadership feels that Congress cannot hope to decide seat sharing on the basis of its past electoral performance as ground realities in West Bengal have undergone major changes. The Congress had won 79 seats when Mamata was in that party. Mamata quit Congress in 1998 and formed Trinamool Congress.

Congress high command does acknowledge the changed political scene in West Bengal and Mamata as the undisputed leader of an alternative government formation in the state. Both Nath and Pranab Mukherjee, president of the West Bengal unit of Congress, have said Mamata will be the Chief Minister if the coalition led by Trinamool Congress is voted to power in the coming elections. What Congress is concerned with in the bargaining for seat-sharing is not the number of seats but the "winnability" of seats allotted to it, party sources here say.

The efforts for Trinamool's alliance with Congress have set off murmurs of resentment in a section of Mamata's party which till the other day described Congress as the "B-team" of West Bengal's ruling CPI (M).

"How will we protect our credibility to voters if we tie up with Congress," said one senior Trinamool leader.

In the event of a break-up of alliance between Trinamool and BJP of failure of tie-up efforts between Trinamool and Congress, it will be music for the ruling Left Front either way.