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VOL. II NO. 205 REGD. NO. DA 781 BHADRA 3, 1399 BS, DHAKA TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 1992 SAFAR 18, 1413 HIJRI 12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

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Menon shot

By Staff Correspondent

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon was shot and seriously injured by unidentified gunmen last night. Menon, with bullet wounds just below his left rib cage, was operated upon at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) immediately after being admitted there.

Attending physicians and surgeons said that the leader was apparently out of danger. Menon was talking to a group of party leaders and workers at 8:35 pm in front of his party office at Topkhana Road after attending a meeting there when the assailants, numbering three, came up to him and fired point blank, eyewitnesses said.

A bleeding Menon fell to the ground grabbing his chest and crying out, "In the chest, in the chest."

The witnesses said that before the shooting, the assailants, armed with cut rifles, positioned themselves in front of a tea shop after threatening the shop owner of dire consequences if he tried to close his shop.

Immediately after the shooting, the assailants escaped through a lane behind the National Awami Party office shouting "We will not let any son of a bitch live and this is the first one", the witnesses said.

Seeing Menon in a pool of blood, his driver, waiting to drive him home ran back to the party office to inform his colleagues about the incident while the other workers carried him to his jeep rushed him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, witnesses said.

Sources at the CMH said that two bullets had hit

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Rashed Khan Menon

Bush planning attack to help protect Kurds

NEW YORK, Aug 17: President George Bush is seeking the support of his Gulf war allies for military action to support Shi'ites in southern Iraq against air attacks by Baghdad, the New York Times said today, reports AFP.

The military action would be similar to the allied intervention in northern Iraq in 1991 to help protect Iraqi Kurds, the Times said.

Under the plan, the United States would declare a zone roughly below the 32nd parallel off limits to Iraqi aircraft, creating a security zone incorporating the major Shi'ite cities in southern Iraq.

The Times quoted a senior administration official as saying "there is now a greater consensus" among the allies for action in southern Iraq.

US officials told the Times that Bush had hoped to announce the intervention plan during the republican convention this week in Houston, but that consultations with Britain, France, Saudi Arabia and

Kuwait had bogged down. Reuters adds: The United States, Britain and France are planning to ban Iraqi military flights in southern Iraq to protect Shi'ite groups from aerial attack, US television networks reported today.

Cable News Network and NBC news said Iraqi airplanes and helicopter flights below the 32nd parallel would be ordered to cease under a plan that is still being worked out.

The establishment of a "no-fly zone" would be enforced by planes from the US aircraft carrier Independence now stationed in the Gulf and other aircraft in the region, the networks said.

Small units of US special forces troops have been moved to the Gulf to protect US airmen who may be shot down, according to NBC.

A London report says, British Air Force bombers are on stand-by to take part in any United Nations-backed air strike on Iraq, government

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Agri Marketing directorate abolished

The cabinet yesterday approved abolition of the Directorate of Agricultural Marketing and Grading and Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institutions (BSTI) has been entrusted with the functions and responsibilities of the abolished directorate, reports BSS.

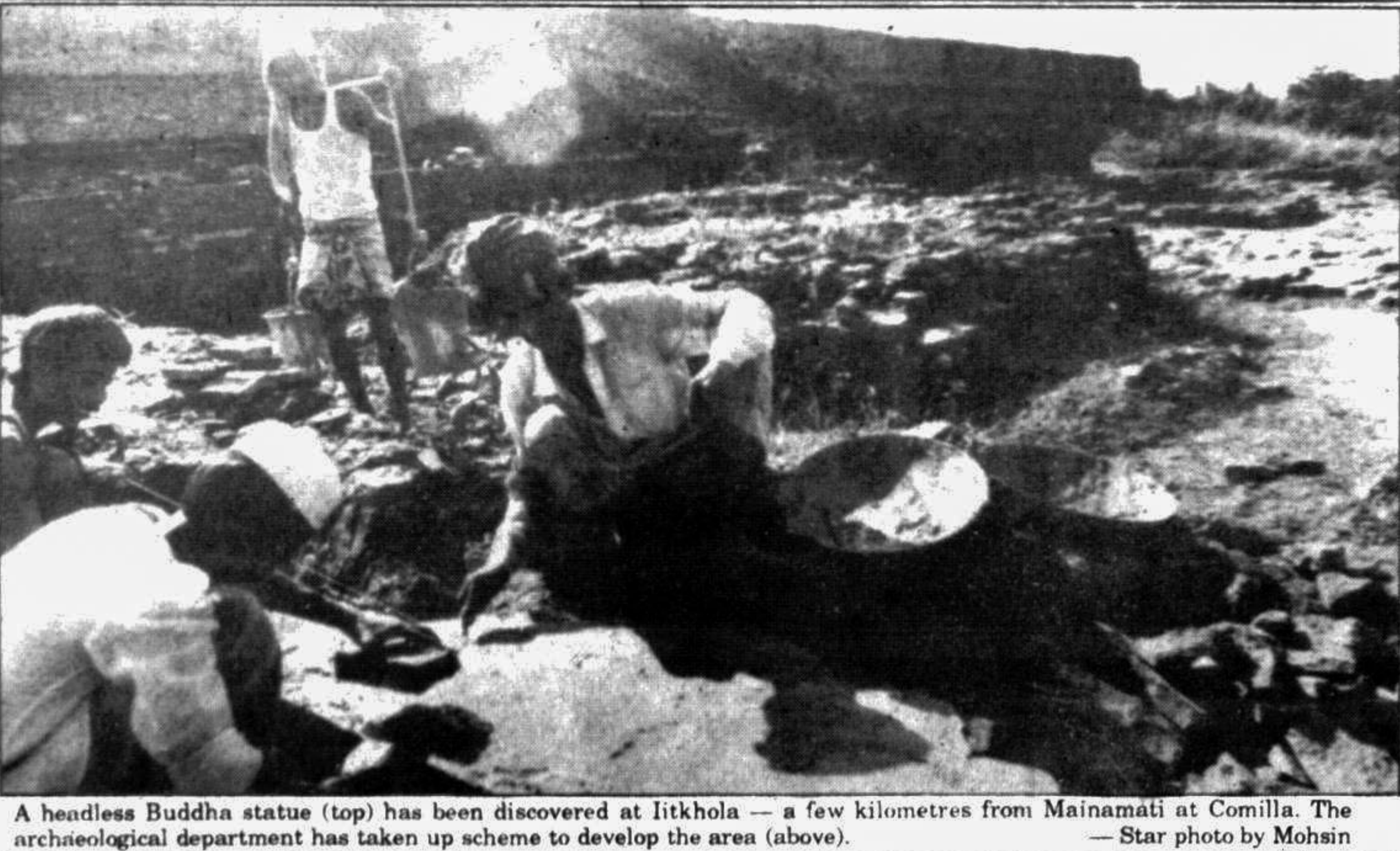
The approval was given at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at Bangabhaban yesterday with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

Ministry of Commerce proposed abolition of the directorate.

This will help avoid duplication of the work and ensure appropriate utilisation of manpower and other technical facilities.

The cabinet also approved the proposal of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications for ratification of the laws and regulations on international postal services adopted in the 20th congress of the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

The instruments of ratification include the fourth additional protocol to the constitution of the UPU, the general regulations of the UPU, universal postal convention and postal parcels agreement and final protocol thereof.



A headless Buddha statue (top) has been discovered at Iitkhola — a few kilometres from Mainamati at Comilla. The archaeological department has taken up scheme to develop the area (above). — Star photo by Mohsin

Huda threatens newspaper owners Implement Wage Board Award or face action

Information Minister Barister Nazmul Huda said in Dhaka yesterday that the process of payment of bulk of the arrear newspaper advertisement bills has been continuing on the basis of certain specific principles, reports BSS.

In a press statement, the minister said this was being done mainly to help implement the Wage Board Award. He urged the newspapers which have not yet implemented the Fourth Wage Board Award to do it within two weeks so that the government does not face any difficulty in clearing the arrear advertisement bills. The government would be compelled to strike off the newspapers from the media list that would fail to implement the Fourth wage Board Award, he added.

In a bid to dispel all confusions on the distribution of newspaper advertisement bills in the wake of various comments and statements on this issue, the Information Minister

pointed out that there had been massive corruption in the distribution system of advertisements by the Department of Films and Publication during the nine-year long autocratic regime. Consequently, manipulated arrear bills piled up. The size of the arrear advertisement bills stood at about Taka seven crore till a few months ago. For this, major changes were effected recently in the Department of Films and Publications and extensive efforts were made to ascertain the reasons of corruption in the distribution of advertisements, he said.

The Information Minister further said during the investigation it was found that there was no basis for many advertisement bills. In some cases the advertisement bills outspaced the given inches in newspapers, he added.

He said in some other cases it was found that advertisements were given to those

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Fresh move to get aid for Barapukuria coal project

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Government of Bangladesh has initiated fresh moves for foreign aid to implement the 'Barapukuria Coal Mine Project', official sources said.

The donors earlier rejected a government request to aid the project saying it would not be economically viable.

According to sources in the External Resources Division (ERD) Bangladesh had already written letters to Japan, Korea, London, China and Germany urging sanction of money for the project. In reply, the ERD sources informed, only China had given assurance to provide technical assistance to the project while other donors refused to commit anything as they still deem the project not viable.

In the fresh bid to have donations to implement the project, the government has

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Bangla-Japan consultation on cooperation begins

The five-day Bangladesh-Japan annual consultation on bilateral cooperation began in Dhaka yesterday underlining a closer friendly relationship, reports BSS.

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Enam Ahmed Chowdhury opened the consultation at the National Economic Council (NEC) committee room.

Additional ERD Secretary Dr A M M Shaukat Ali is leading the Bangladesh side while the 13-member Japanese delegation is headed by Japanese Foreign Ministry Deputy Director General Hiroshi Hashimoto.

The bilateral economic cooperation between the two

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Cultural function on Indonesian Independence Day at Sonargaon Hotel Yesterday. — Star photo

Plan to refloat tender for offloading MCL shares

By Inam Ahmed

The government is planning to refloat the tender to offload the remaining shares of Metalex Corporation (MCL), a unit of the Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC), according to concerned sources.

The tender may be refloated as the lone bid on the last tender was found to be non-responsive, they said.

The deadline for submitting bids ended last month. The government will offload the 51 per cent shares of the MCL. These include 25500 shares with a face value of Taka 100 each. However, the market value of the MCL shares is now Taka 105 each.

Sources said that the bid for

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NEWS BRIEFS

Fake passport makers arrested
 Police caught red handed two miscreants along with equipment to make fake passports from Jafarabad of Mohammadpur area. Acting on a tip, police nabbed Abdul Mannan (45) and Mohammad Habib (32), reports UNB.

Arms recovered, two arrested
 CHITTAGONG, Aug 17: A squad of Chittagong district police uncovered an arsenal at Urkitchar under Rauzan Thana today. Two persons were also arrested in this connection. According to a police press release, acting on secret information the police squad surrounded an abandoned house at Urkitchar and found one pipe gun, one pistol, two rifles and huge quantity of materials used for manufacturing firearms inside the house, reports BSS.

Indonesian envoy hosts reception
 The ambassador of Indonesia in Bangladesh and his wife Mrs Soemakno Iswadi held a reception here yesterday in the evening on the occasion of the 47th anniversary of the Indonesian Independence Day. The reception was attended by Food Minister Shamsul Islam, State Minister for Women Affairs Mrs Sarwai Rahman, high civil and military officials, diplomats and elite of the city, reports BSS.

Hides, skin, statue recovered
 Customs intelligence yesterday recovered hides and skin of Royal Bengal Tiger, leopard, deer, python, lizard and bush-cat and one touchstone statue worth about Taka 50 lakh from the Sakura market area, reports BSS.

Hekmatyar captures strategic hill

KABUL, Aug 17: Renegade Mujahedeen forces launched fresh attacks against government positions here today as thousands fled the capital, but officials say the offensive has been repulsed, reports AFP.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said a 50-tank attacking force belonging to the radical Hezb-i-Islami party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was repulsed by government troops supported by rocket fire and jet strikes.

"We knew about their plan and were prepared in advance to push them back," said the spokesman.

The national highway running to the provincial capital Jalalabad close to the Pakistan border remains closed, stranding thousands of civilians attempting to flee the fighting which in the last two weeks has claimed up to 1,200 casualties.

All but six of Kabul's United Nations staff pulled out of the capital early Saturday, the first of the foreign community to leave.

In a small convoy of unspecified numbers, they drove north to the provincial capital of Mazar-i-Sharif where the safety of all foreigners has been guaranteed by Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek militia general formerly close to the deposed communist regime and now an important ally of the new Islamic government.

Mazar-i-Sharif airport is open for evacuation flights but the UN left by the overland route to Termez in Uzbekistan from where they flew to Islamabad skirting Afghan airspace.

Mystery surrounded the whereabouts of former Afghan President Najibullah today after the UN pulled out most of its people from Kabul leaving only a skeleton staff at the office where he had sought refuge.

Special UN envoy to Afghanistan, Asotirios Mousouris, would say only "it is a mystery to everyone," refusing to elaborate on the 'delicate' topic.

Dostum's 53rd Division militia are integrated into the fledgling Afghan army and are front line defenders against assaults on the city by Hezb-i-Islami.

Foreign diplomats based in Kabul have yet to decide on whether to go or to stay.

Approximately 20 foreign missions are still based here and estimated 250 to 300 personnel including wives and children.

A Defence Ministry official said that a preemptive strike by government jets had destroyed the runway at the former Soviet military air base now under the control of Hekmatyar at Shindand, close to Herat on the Iranian border.

The official said that Hekmatyar was planning to transfer his jets from there to the recently extended air base in Jalalabad from where he could easily bomb the capital.

Reuters adds: Hezb-i-Islami fighters seized the strategic Tapa Taj Bik hill near the De-

See Page 12 Col 8

Indo-Pak talks on Kashmir begin

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: India and Pakistan Monday had their first official talk in 20 years on their dispute over Kashmir, but remained far apart on how the conflict should be settled, reports AP.

The discussion represented a shift by Pakistan, which previously wanted the 45-year-old quarrel resolved by the United Nations.

India has long favoured the bilateral approach to settling the Kashmir issue, over which the two countries have gone to war twice and where border skirmishes still are routine.

Pakistan restated its position that ownership of the northern territory in the

Himalayan foothills should be decided by a plebiscite of its residents, according to a 1947 UN resolution.

India demanded that Pakistan must stop supporting a Muslim insurgency in Kashmir, which has claimed nearly 5,000 lives since it escalated in 1990.

To support its case, each side cited different clauses of the 1972 Simla Agreement that followed the Bangladesh War — the third war between them.

Kashmir, which was ruled by a Hindu maharaja but had a Muslim majority, was claimed by both newly independent

See Page 12 Col 3

Mortar attacks kill 8 in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Aug 17: Mortar shells raining on Sarajevo killed at least eight people in explosions in a crowded street in the city centre and other areas of the Bosnian capital today, reports Reuters.

The upsurge of violence erupted hours after a UN convoy, which braved fighting and mined roads to deliver relief supplies to the town of Gorazde for the first time since Serbs besieged it 146 days ago, returned safely to Sarajevo.

Eyewitnesses said at least one person was killed in the centre of Sarajevo by a mortar bomb which exploded in a crowded street and four others died when another hit a car near UN headquarters.