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### NEWS BRIEFS

#### Italian team due Aug 27

An eight-member Italian delegation is due in Dhaka on August 27 with specific offers of joint venture on leather manufactures, including shoes, in Bangladesh. The delegation of leading leather goods manufacturers, during its week-long stay, will meet local tanners and officials to discuss export-oriented joint ventures in leather sector, reports UNB.

#### Hartal in Barguna today

BARGUNA, Aug 22 : Mahasarak Bastabayan Committee today called for a six-hour hartal tomorrow in the district demanding immediate completion of Barguna-Betagi-Bakerganj highway. The construction work on the 60 km long highway began in 1985 but the Roads and Highways Department closed the site for the last one month. Seventy per cent work of the highway has been completed so far, reports UNB.

#### Janmashtami functions end

The two-day programme of the Kendriya Janmashtami Utasab Committee marking the birth anniversary of Lord Sri Krishna ended in Dhaka yesterday through holding a discussion. Dr. Aminul Islam Professor of Philosophy of the Dhaka University, attended the discussion as the chief guest while Sri Prafulla Kumar Hawladar presided, reports BSS.

### Move to ease situation over attempt on Menon

## 5-party agrees to sit with PM

By Mahfuz Ullah

The Five-Party Alliance yesterday decided against a government offer to hold a formal dialogue with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on the situation arising out of the attempt on Rashed Khan Menon.

The proposed meeting was scheduled for yesterday.

The Alliance, however, agreed to hold informal discussions with the Prime Minister 'not for media consumption but to work out measures to ease the situation'.

The government offer for a dialogue matured Friday and the invitation was communicated to the Alliance leaders Saturday.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) sources said that Khondaker Delwar Hossain, Chief Whip in parliament and Abdul Mannan Bhuiya, Minister

for Labour and Manpower, had been assigned to convey the invitation.

The Five-Party sources said that the Alliance leaders were not sure how the Prime Minister would react to their decision for informal discussion.

Admitting the move for contacts, Abdus Salam Talukder, BNP Secretary General and Minister for LQRD told The Daily Star that 'there had been contacts and that the process was continuing'.

The Five-Party Alliance had an emergency meeting last evening with Nirmal Sen in the chair to discuss the proposal. The participants observed that the government was yet to respond favourably to their demands, especially for the removal of the Home Minister and the ban on the

Jubo Command.

Approving an informal dialogue, the Alliance leaders observed that it would allow them to read the mind of the government, sources said.

The meeting was attended among others by Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Acting Secretary, Workers Party, Hasanul Huq Inu of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Khalequzzaman of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) and Naim Jahangir of Oikya Prokria. A F M Mahbubul Huq, Abdullah Sarker and Bimal Biswas were also present.

Meanwhile, the BNP has decided to launch a mass-contact drive to explain to the people the reasons for the deteriorating law and order situation and measures taken to bring it under control.

### Attack on Menon

#### Indian citizen held in Jessore

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Rifles officials arrested Shah Nawaz, allegedly an Indian citizen without passport, from the Jessore border yesterday when he tried to cross over to India from Bangladesh.

Shah Nawaz was being interrogated by the Jessore Kotwali police.

Officials said that the person arrested might have some kind of link with the attack on Menon.

Another team of police was

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#### Menon's condition better, CMH says

By Staff Correspondent

For the first time since he had been shot Monday night, Rashed Khan Menon had liquid food yesterday, Combined Military Hospital sources said.

Menon drank tea and had some soup. He could even sit and talk, according to his family sources.

CMH sources further said he has shown over all im-

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### Rohingya repatriation

## Talks again fail to yield timetable

From Abdul Monayem Khan

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 22 : Bangladesh and Myanmar have failed to set a new date for the repatriation of 265,000 Rohingya refugees.

Officials at the eighth round of talks Saturday, however, agreed on a number of measures aimed at encouraging the refugees to return home voluntarily.

After more than three hours of talks in this sea resort town, leader of the Bangladesh delegation Omar Faruq told reporters that Myanmar had agreed to permit a delegation of the refugees to visit their homeland, Arakan, as frequently as they wanted to assess their living conditions.

Though we have not been able to set a new repatriation date, some progress has been achieved," Faruq, the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner, said in reply to a question.

Faruq led a 10-member delegation at the talks at the New Circuit House, while an

equal number of Myanmar officials were headed by Aung Maung, Director General of Immigration.

The repatriation of the refugees was to have started May 15, but was stalled after violent street protests by the refugees who refused to return home until the United Nations was involved in the process.

Since then, officials of the two countries have been trying to devise ways to ensure voluntary repatriation of the refugees, living in 20 makeshift camps in the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf region.

At Saturday's talks Myanmar also agreed to relax the restrictions on the movement of Rohingyas in Arakan and grant them more religious freedom. Refugees who have no citizenship certificates or lost them would get the documents back after their return home.

On religious freedom Myanmar said that the previously-imposed restrictions on

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### OIC asks India to resolve Kashmir issue peacefully

ISLAMABAD, Aug 22: India must resolve its dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir peacefully, Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Secretary General Hamid Al-Gabid was reported as saying today, reports AFP.

"We once again call upon the government of India to abandon its futile attempts to suppress the Kashmiri struggle and seek a peaceful solution in line with the UN resolutions, he said in a message to an international Islamic gathering here Saturday.

A UN resolution, adopted after the first Indo-Pakistan war in 1948 over Kashmir, envisaged a plebiscite for the Kashmiris to decide which of the two countries they wanted to join.

The neighbours again fought over the dispute in 1965.

In his message, read out at the conference of religious scholars, the OIC chief expressed concern over the gross and systematic violations of human rights of the Kashmiri people.

### Sweetmeat shop owners agree to pay VAT

By S Y Bakht

Sweetmeat shop owners in the capital have agreed to finalise necessary registrations and pay the value added tax (VAT), according to National Board of Revenue (NBR) sources on Saturday.

An understanding was reached to this effect between representatives of the owners and officials of the Dhaka Customs, Excise and VAT Collectorate, the sources added.

However, no understanding was reached about the payment of VAT in arrears and penalties due.

Earlier, on August 16, Collectorate officials closed down 15 major sweetmeat shops in the city for failing to pay VAT and penalties worth over Taka 3.08 crore. The padlocked shops include branches of Aladin, Ambala and Maran Chand.

According to a Collectorate statement, these business establishments had 'collectively failed' to respond to several notices from the NBR and did not pay VAT since its imposition in July 1991. These sweetmeat shops did not even bother to fix up necessary registrations, the statement added.

The sweetmeat shop owners, as per the understanding,

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### Foreign secys hold formal talks

## Dhaka, Delhi to revive JEC

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and India have agreed, after ten years, to revive the Joint Economic Commission (JEC). Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman told newsmen yesterday after meeting his Indian counterpart.

The JEC, co-chaired by the foreign ministers,

Rahman and Indian External Affairs Secretary Jitendra Nath Dixit, now on a two-day visit to Dhaka, held formal discussions for two hours yesterday morning.

Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Raghunandan Lal Bhatia will be in Dhaka in the second week of October to attend the meeting of the JEC, dormant since it last met in 1982 in New Delhi.

The two-way trade is heavily tilted against Bangladesh. Since 1972-73, the accumulated surplus has stood at 1.3 billion US dollars, Reaz Rahman said. Early this month, the Commerce Ministers met in New Delhi and agreed to extend the bilateral trade pact by three years.

The talks were quite significant on several counts — in the context of the forthcoming NAM summit, the 47th UNGA session and also from the regional point of view as Dhaka hosts the SAARC summit in December," the Foreign Secretary said adding that they had touched all the bilateral issues as part of regular consultations towards resolving the sore points.

"It (Dixit's visit) is in line with the traditional routine visits we had agreed to re-establish during our Foreign Minister's tour of India last year and reiterated at the Prime Ministers' level last May," Reaz Rahman said. During the Ershad years "regular consultations" at this level had come to a halt.

On the bilateral plane, they discussed land boundary demarcation exchange of enclaves and adverse possessions, the vexed issue of water sharing, the repatriation of Chakmas, illegal immigration and terrorist activities.

On the enclaves, Rahman

said, "There is not much discrepancy" and hoped that the solution was only a matter of time.

On the water sharing, he referred to the Indian Irrigation Minister Vidya Charan Shukla's upcoming visit and did not elaborate since the matter will be taken up at ministerial level."

Shukla, who arrives Dhaka Tuesday night, is scheduled to hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Majid-ul-Huq Wednesday and depart Thursday.

The Foreign Secretaries also dealt with transit facilities for India through Bangladesh, and prospective joint venture projects.

Speaking on New Delhi's proposals for road and rail transit, the Foreign Secretary said that these issues had "political as well as practical overtones."

On the repatriation of tribals, he spoke of the political agreement at the summit level and mentioned Prime Minister

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Employees of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Boards brought out a procession in the city yesterday to press for their seven-point demands. — Star photo

### GCO to gherao PM's office Aug 29

By DU Correspondent

The Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO) yesterday (Saturday) demanded ban on politics of Jamaat-Shibir and Jubo Command immediately.

The GCO, at a rally held at the 'battala' of the Dhaka University, also announced a series of programmes, including gheraoing (besieging) the Prime Minister's office on August 29 in support of their demand for the replacement of the Home Minister and the arrest of those involved in the killing of Ratan Sen and the recent attempt on Menon's life.

The GCO programme also includes processions and rallies from August 23 to August 28 in all educational institutes in the country.

The GCO leaders addressing the rally said that the government was 'directly patronising killers and terrorists.'

### Accord to pull back troops from Siachen

NEW DELHI, Aug 22 : India and Pakistan have decided to pull back their troops from confrontation in the Siachen glacier in Kashmir, reports Xinhua.

This was confirmed at the bilateral Foreign Secretary level talks concluded here earlier this week, the English daily The Pioneer today quoted the Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shahryar Khan as disclosing in an interview.

He said the Defence Secretaries of the two countries have been given the mandate of working out the details of the troops withdrawal from the glacial heights.

He saw no problem for the finalization of the details at the Defence Secretary level talks in next October, saying that the glacier would take place almost immediately afterwards.

The bizarre war at Siachen

symbolizes the futility of Indo-Pak confrontation, and more people died of frostbite than bullets, the Pakistani Foreign Secretary added.

PTI from Bhopal adds : BJP today hit out at the centre for its 'failure' on the Kashmir issue and warned that it would not allow the ceding of any part of Kashmir to Pakistan.

The party's three-day national executive began here with a firm determination to tackle the Kashmir issue, which Pakistan occupied in 1947-48," he said.

Dr Joshi also came down heavily on the Narasimha Rao government for its failure to take a firm stand during the recent secretary level Indo-Pak talk on Kashmir and tell Pakistan to stop aiding and promoting terrorist and secessionist forces in the country.

### UN hq shelled in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Aug 22: Mortar rounds shattered windows and blew holes in a parking lot at UN headquarters Saturday, while the capital's airport lifeline to the outside world was temporarily closed by shelling, reports AP.

Meanwhile, a Bosnian presidency spokesman denied a published report that government troops have fired on civilians as a propaganda ploy. He added that an investigation would be launched into the sniper killing of a Ukrainian peacekeeper.

Nobody was hurt at the UN building, which came under fire just before the new UN commander, Brig Gen Ali Abdel-Razek Hussein of Egypt, returned from his first meeting with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic.

The general arrived in Sarajevo on Friday. The building was damaged by one shell that hit the roof, a UN official said. Two others landed in the parking lot and a

fourth hit a ramp leading into the building.

Mortar shells also landed at the airport, which is guarded by UN forces and its Sarajevo's main link to the outside world.

UN peacekeepers said the rounds exploded near the tarmac and runway between 8:20 and 8:50 am (0620-0650 GMT), and that the airport had been shut until 10 am (0800 GMT).

Earlier in the week, the warring factions around Sarajevo signed an agreement to put all their heavy weapons under UN supervision. But the Egyptian general told reporters he did not know when the accord would be put into effect.

He said he thought enforcement could be hampered more by a lack of will on both sides rather than a lack of UN monitors.

Britain's Press Association, quoting the Ministry of Defense, said two British sol-

diers, from the 22nd Royal Engineers Regiment, were slightly wounded by shrapnel Saturday.

It said they were wounded while digging a shelter for UN observers. They were being treated in a UN field hospital and then would be evacuated, it said.

Hussein said Izetbegovic "expressed concern" at their meeting about reports that a Bosnian territorial soldier might have been the sniper who killed a Ukrainian peacekeeper on Thursday.

But presidential spokesman Kemar Mufic said Izetbegovic denied a report that Sarajevo's mainly Muslim defenders may have shelled civilians, making it appears Serbs did it, to win sympathy and trigger international military intervention.

The article, published Saturday in Britain's Independent newspaper, cited confidential reports it said were circulating among UN officials.

### Hekmatyar agrees to one-day ceasefire

ISLAMABAD, Aug 22: Dissident Afghan leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has agreed to a ceasefire proposed by the United Nations for the evacuation of diplomats and their families from Kabul, his spokesman said here today, reports AFP.

"We agree to their safe evacuation by road and we will also try to look at the possibility of evacuation by air," Mangal Hussain said in a statement.

The UN on Friday urged the Afghan government and Mujahideen forces to accept a ceasefire in Kabul to permit diplomats to leave the be-

sieged city. The Afghan capital has been under heavy rocket attack for the past two weeks in an ongoing war between government forces and Hekmatyar's Hezb-Islami faction.

Hussain said that once an evacuation date was confirmed, Hezb would announce a ceasefire for that day and we will instruct our Mujahideen to take security measures on the highway."

More than 250 diplomats are still in Kabul, of which 215 have said they wanted to leave, UN sources here said. Most of the UN personnel who were

stationed in Kabul had already left the capital.

More than 1,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

Reuter from Kabul adds: A rocket fired by rebel Afghan forces killed 10 people in a Kabul square and a hardline leader vowed to intensify an offensive if the government failed to meet his demands, Mujahideen sources said today.

The rocket ploughed into Bar-i-Ballah Square on Friday afternoon, killing at least 10 people, a Mujahideen source in radio contact with the capital said.

### West trying to divide country: Iraqi PM

Hekmatyar threatened to intensify his blistering two-week offensive on Kabul if Uzbek militia that defected from the former communist government do not surrender within a week, a spokesman said.

"For the last time, we declare that unless the remnants of the communist regime leave Kabul within a week, and unless its men surrender... not only will we mount the final act but also we will extend fighting to militia-controlled areas in the north," he said in a statement broadcast on his message to Freedom Radio.

### West trying to divide country: Iraqi PM

NICOSIA, Aug 22: Iraq's Prime Minister on Saturday condemned allied plans to ban Iraqi aircraft from southern Iraq and said they were part of a plot to divide the country, the official Iraqi news agency said, reports AP.

Prime Minister Mohammed Hanza al-Zubaidi said the Iraqis would defend the nation's integrity with all their power.

"Iraq firmly rejects any criminal act, schemed by the United States, Britain and

France," Zubaidi was quoted as saying at a special meeting of the Cabinet.

He said "the three colonialist countries, in coordination with the Iranian regime, are aiming at Iraq's national unity and want to bring back the English and American colonialists' domination on Iraq's wealth."

"The Iraqi premier added that Iraqis shall stand as one man in order to foil the new conspiracy, whatever the con-

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### Malaysian FM due today

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmed Badawi arrives in Dhaka today (Sunday) on a 5-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

He will be accompanied by his wife Datin Hajah Hendon Binti Dato Mahmood.

During his stay here, Badawi will hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart A S M Mostafizur Rahman on bilateral matters, and regional and international issues of common concern.

The talks will be followed by signing of an agreement on setting up of a Joint Economic Commission.

The Malaysian Foreign Minister is expected to call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

### SAARC summit dates finalised

By Staff Correspondent

The dates of the seventh SAARC summit and other related programmes have been formally agreed upon by all the seven member nations, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman said yesterday.

Dhaka hosts the summit on December 12-14, preceded by a two-day Council Committee meeting of Foreign Ministers on the 10th and 11th.

Rahman told reporters that the summitees would arrive by December 11.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman will travel to the other six SAARC capitals sometime in October carrying formal invitations for the heads of state and government on behalf of Prime Minister

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