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NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas, Khaleda greet Soeharto

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in separate messages, have greeted President Soeharto of Indonesia on the occasion of his country's 48th Independence Day, reports BSS.

Milad on PM's birthday

Zia Parshad yesterday held a milad mahfil in celebration of 49th birth anniversary of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at its central office, a parishad press release said.

The milad mahfil was attended, among others, by chairman of the Parishad Kabir Murad, vice chairman Syed Mesbah Uddin and secretary general Taranga Anwar, reports BSS.

406 Rohingyas go home

From Our Correspondent COX'S BAZAR, Aug 16: Another 406 Rohingyas refugees have been repatriated to Myanmar this morning. With this, the total number of returnees stands at 33,046.

BCL (B-K) to stage demonstration

By Staff Correspondent Bangladesh Chhatra League (B-K) will stage a demonstration in front of the 'Shiksha Bhaban' today demanding realisation of the 10-point demands. The JSD backed BCL will bring out a procession from the Dhaka University campus. The demands include withdrawal of the proposed enhancement of tuition fees.

5 missing in boat capsized

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 16: Five people, including a woman, were reportedly missing after an engine boat capsized in the Jamuna near Kazipur thana today. Witnesses said the boat with about 39 passengers was heading towards Sirajganj and overturned in the river during heavy rain at about 3 pm, reports UNB.

Domestic skies opened to private sector

Star Report

The government has permitted operation of private airlines in different domestic routes.

The Cabinet yesterday okayed the proposal of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism opening up the airlines industry to the private sector.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia chaired the weekly meeting at Bangabhaban.

Initially, short take-off and landing (STOL) services would be allowed in different domestic routes where the national carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines is not operating. Biman currently operates on seven domestic routes— Dhaka,

Chittagong, Rajshahi, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Jessore and Saidpur.

A ministry source said that Shamsheeragar in Sylhet, Lalmonirhat, Ishwardi, Barisal, Patuakhali and Mongla have the required facilities for STOL service.

The source, who attended the meeting, said that the Prime Minister showed 'special interest' in this matter in the wake of growing traffic in different domestic routes.

The source said that a number of agencies including Vantage Tours and Travels and Borak Travels have already

submitted proposals for operating aircraft in different routes within the country.

Borak Travels earlier operated 88 charter flights between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur in May and June with Biman's approval following the May 18 accident of one of the aircraft of the national airlines at Zia International Airport.

Meanwhile, the government approval for operation of airlines in the private sector evoked mixed reaction among aviation and tourism circles.

Younus Chowdhury, Cultural Secretary of the

Directive to start test relief programmes

The cabinet yesterday reviewed the latest flood situation in the country and the measures taken so far for relief and succour to the affected people besides rehabilitation programmes undertaken by the concerned ministries, reports UNB.

The cabinet at the regular weekly meeting also directed the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation to start test relief programme immediately and undertake rehabilitation works expeditiously to mitigate the sufferings of the people effected badly.

The meeting held at the Bangabhaban was chaired by

Peace talks resume in Geneva

GENEVA, Aug 16: Leaders of the three warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina agreed at peace talks here today to give UN military observers total freedom of movement throughout the region, conference spokesman John Mills said, report AFP/AP.

Mills described the agreement as an 'important decision' which would create a 'better atmosphere of trust for these negotiations.'

The talks between the former Yugoslav republic's Serb, Croat

and Muslim factions resumed today after breaking down two weeks ago amid deep differences over how to split the state among them.

It took two weeks of pressure, cajoling and delicate negotiations to persuade Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic to return to the bargaining table.

The Croat leader, Mate Boban, said in a statement after his arrival at UN European headquarters that he 'sincerely hoped that this round of talks

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Top level changes in NBR soon

By Staff Correspondent Top level administrative reorganisation is likely in the National Board of Revenue (NBR) soon.

According to an informed source, a Member (Taxes) is likely to go on retirement. Two other senior officials— Member (Administration) and a Member (Customs)—are expected to be made OSDs in the Ministry of Establishment.

A senior Commissioner of Taxes and a Deputy Commissioner are also to be retired.

It was reliably learnt that replacements for the three Members of the NBR are already

Exports: MCCI sees lack of commitment

By Staff Correspondent

A recent publication of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) says there is a lack of national commitment to attain export competitiveness.

The lead item of 'Chamber News', the official MCCI mouthpiece, released yesterday, bemoaned this in the absence of an enabling atmosphere in the government administration towards realisation of policy objectives and also the role of some political parties and trade union leadership.

The country's exports remain low both in volume and domestic value-added production, the article observes.

The Chamber felt that in the changing global scenario, total support to export efforts is crucial as export competitiveness depends on optimal efficiency of resource use. To sustain export growth, it is imperative to support the quickest change-over to a market economy.

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Murder case against Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Aug 16: The brother of a slain political leader in Pakistan's Punjab province has filed a murder case against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, police said today, reports Reuters.

Malik Zafar Ali, a leader of Benazir Bhutto's opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP), was gunned down in the eastern city of Lahore on Sunday evening by two unknown motorcyclists.

A police official speaking over telephone from Lahore said Ali's brother Malik Shams had registered a report with police alleging the murder was planned by Sharif and his advisor Brigadier Intiaz Ahmed, a former intelligence chief.

Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif Monday denied allegations that he was involved in the weekend murder.



Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament Abdus Samad Azad seen with members of the Bangladesh Betar Television Shilpi Sangsad who staged a sit-in in front of the Television Bhaban at Rampura in the city yesterday.

Taka convertibility may initially affect exporters, importers

Exporters and importers both may adversely be affected at the preliminary stage of convertibility of the Taka because the dealers may go for profiteering in the decontrolled money market, reports UNB.

The caution came from Bangladesh Bank Governor Khorshed Alam who said the greater spread between buying and selling rates of the central bank may lead to the dealers charging higher rates to the importers and offering lower rates to the exporters.

The convertibility of the Taka and consequent inter-bank foreign exchange market operation will initially result in a mixed feeling of caution and enthusiasm in embarking upon

the sensitive foreign exchange market," he told a seminar on "Convertibility of Taka and its Impact and Implications."

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor said lack of experience and expertise in dealing in foreign exchange in a new environment might lead to 'extra caution' while enthusiasm may lead to 'costly blunders.' However, he hoped, subsequently a competitive market environment would reduce the profit margin and the benefits trickle down to the exporters and importers.

The competition will also lead to fixation of correct prices, dictated by the market forces of demand and supply.

The authorised dealers have to function in balance in the

unprotected, free foreign exchange market, Alam said and suggested the dealers take quick preparation to bear the responsibility.

Organised by the Bangladesh Bank Training Academy, the day-long seminar was also attended by Deputy Governors and General Managers of the BB and some 40 officials from different scheduled banks.

Speaking on productivity, the BB Governor said access of the domestic entrepreneurs to foreign exchange was likely to increase productivity through import of technical know-how.

The provision for prior approval of the central bank for remittance of royalty and tech-

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Radio, TV artistes stage sit-in near TV Bhaban

By Staff Correspondent

Radio and television artistes yesterday morning staged a sit-in in front of the Television Bhaban at Rampura in protest against the alleged distortion of historical facts and politicisation of the national media.

Scheduled at 10 am, the programme, convened by the 'Bangladesh Radio Television Artists' Association', was delayed by two hours due to police interception, according to the organisers.

Hundreds of performers converged to renew their demands. Curious spectators also assembled at the venue.

Chaired by singer Kalim Sharafi, the meeting was addressed by Ali Zaker, Mamunur Rashid, Prof. Labani, Sankar Saonjal and others.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad, Rashed Khan Menon, MP, Faiz Ahmed of the Sammitto Sangskritik Jote, and columnist Strajul Islam Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.

The speakers blamed the 'autocratic Ershad' and the 'democratic Khaleda' governments for not providing autonomy to television and radio, as promised earlier.

Talking to The Daily Star, the General Secretary of the association Jamaluddin Hoossain said 'nepotism, anarchism and politicisation had polluted the environment in the national electronic media.'

'A bill moved in the Jatiya Sangsad by an Opposition MP

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Professionals boycott DC, TNO meets from today

By Staff Correspondent

Nearly 70,000 government officials, including cadre service officers, engineers, agriculturists and doctors, are initiating a nationwide non-cooperation campaign against the District Commissioners (DC) and Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) starting from today.

This was announced at a press conference at the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) auditorium by Dr M A Majed, chairman of the Prakash-shah, Krishbid, Chikittshak and Bangladesh Civil Service (Prokricchi-BCS) Kendrio Sangram Parishad.

He said the members of the parishad would boycott all District Development Coordination Committee meetings con-

vened and presided by the DCs beginning from today and it would also include boycotting coordination meetings of the TNOs at the thana level.

The Prokricchi-BCS Parishad members would also refrain from participating in all other district-level ministerial committee meetings presided by the DCs and would also boycott various projects under government grants sent through the DCs and TNOs.

Dr Majed, who is also the president of the BMA, demanded the immediate implementation of the parishad's 4-point proposals, reportedly already agreed upon by the government, and placing all district

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Forum on energy policy today

The government has convened a forum of politicians and professionals in the city today to review the existing situation in the energy sector and suggest guidelines for formulating a national energy policy.

Officials told Probe News Service (PNS) that the forum will discuss a background paper containing key issues of the vital infrastructural sector, prepared by the national energy policy formulation committee, and hammer out a consensus policy.

The national policy is proposed to be formulated for a period up to the year 2020 considering the status of energy re-

serves and rapid technological changes.

The committee, which was directed to submit a draft policy to the government by August 15, sought an extension of six months to prepare the policy. A petroleum policy, which will form part of the energy policy, was hurriedly approved by the cabinet last month (July).

About 150 political leaders and professionals have been invited to participate in the forum, split into four business sessions on resource assessment, planning methodology, implementation and monitoring, and institutional aspects. It will begin at 9 am at the National

Economic Council (NEC) Bhaban of the Planning Commission.

The major issues to be discussed include balanced development of all energy resources, a petroleum policy, end-use based energy planning, zonal distribution of energy, rural energy planning and investment in energy development programme.

The forum is taking place in the backdrop of a very low per capita consumption of commercial energy (oil, natural gas, coal and electricity), about 58 kg oil equivalent. This is one-fortieth of world average, one-

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JP stalwarts threaten to float new party

The Jatiya Party is likely to suffer a major split if the present leadership does not demonstrate its willingness to broad-base, reorganise and revitalise the party.

Some 30 JP stalwarts, led by former Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury, have decided to leave the party to float a new political organisation of their own if the desired changes are not forthcoming.

Announcing this, Shamsul Huda Chowdhury told UNB yesterday the future course of action of the group would be formally announced at a news conference here on September 10.

Expressing his dissatisfaction and disapproval of the way the party was being presently run, he noted with deep anguish that it had been reduced to a 'pocket organisation playing politics of certain interested coteries and caucuses.'

To reverse this 'unhealthy trend eating into the vitals of JP', Chowdhury had convened a meeting of the like-minded JP stalwarts of the past and present at his residence on August 1.

Sensing trouble, Maudud Ahmed rushed to Shamsul Huda Chowdhury on July 30 and assured him that action would be taken to broaden the

base of the party by accommodating JP stalwarts of the past and the present and by incorporating their viewpoints to add fresh vigour and dynamism to its politics on the basis of its political ideology and programmes. Accordingly, the meeting scheduled for August 1 was put off.

But subsequently no action was taken by the JP leadership to translate the assurances given by Maudud Ahmed into action. Hence Chowdhury, who is also a member of the JP presidium, is left with no other option but to convene the press conference to announce his group's future course of action.

Shamsul Huda Chowdhury further stated that regardless of the reorganisation of the Jatiya Party or the launching of a new one, the following five principles would form the basis on either case:

The five principles, according to a statement issued by Chowdhury, include: inspiring, uniting and consolidating all sections of people to enable them to serve the country; laying the foundation of a truly democratic administration at all tiers of society; fostering unity and fraternity among masses in the light of religious values; ensuring the right to religion to all

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