

NIRMAN TILES
Broken Marble Tiles
In More Shades
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NEWS BRIEFS

Arab FMs meet in Beirut Friday

BEIRUT, Aug 21: Lebanon said today foreign ministers of Arab partners to Middle East peace negotiations will meet in Beirut next Friday for coordination talks. Foreign Minister Paris Bouez told reporters he and his Syrian, Jordanian and Palestinian counterparts would meet on August 27 and 28 to coordinate stands before Arab-Israeli peace talks resume at the end of this month, reports Reuter.

Two killed in Pabna road mishap

PABNA, Aug 21: Two people were killed and four others injured as a speeding truck smashed a rickshaw on the Pabna-Nagarbarti highway at Durgapur in Santia thana today, reports UNB.

Quake hits Papua New Guinea

PORT MORESBY, Aug 21: More than 15 homes were badly damaged, but only a few minor injuries were reported after a powerful earthquake hit Papua New Guinea's southern highlands, officials here said today. Landslides were compounding the damage caused by the earthquake, which measured 6.5 on the open-ended Richter scale, the Director-General of the National Disaster and Emergency Council, Leth Anderson said, reports AFP.

5 extortionists arrested

From Our Correspondent
GAZIPUR, Aug 21: Five extortionists were arrested here today for demanding tolls from one Abdul Rashid. The arrested persons are Mousam, Mosharraf, Kasimuddin, Salim and Haba.

Domestic STOL services

Four firms apply for air route licences

By Asiuzzaman

The authorities have so far received four applications from private entrepreneurs interested to operate air services on different domestic routes, officials sources said yesterday.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has received applications seeking licences from Borak Travels, Orient Travels, Vantage Travels and Natasha Travels following last week's cabinet decision to open up the domestic skies to privately-run short take-off and landing (STOL) aircraft.

The first two agencies are owned by the same company, while the last one — Natasha Travels — is owned by a ruling

party MP, the source said on condition of anonymity.

The government approval, however, restricted operations of private airlines to some specified destinations only where the national carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines does not operate. Shamshearnagar of Sylhet, Lalmonirhat, Iswardi, Barisal, Patuakhali, Mongla, Thakurgaon and Comilla have airstrips where STOL aircraft, which usually accommodate a maximum of 30 passengers, can operate.

A ministry source pointed out that some of these destinations could be made operational

in two months' time after minor repair of the runways and installation of necessary communication facilities.

Biman now operates on seven domestic routes — Dhaka, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rajshahi, Jessore, Sylhet and Saidpur — and 29 international destinations.

The source hinted that Cox's Bazar and Saidpur may also be opened to STOL operations.

Officials at the ministry were working on the cabinet decision and preparing guidelines for the STOL service operators in line with those regulating private

Hasina thanks people for making rally a success

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday thanked the people for making success of Friday's grand rally to press for scrapping the indemnity Ordinance and registering protest against "corruption, politicisation and misuse of the BNP", reports UNB.

In a statement, Hasina alleged that the BNP government was involved in a dirty conspiracy and let loose the killers of '71 and '75 to foil the grand rally at the Manik Mia Avenue. They also hurled bombs at the offices of the Banglar Bani and the Ittefaq, she said.

But lakhs of people had joined the meeting spontaneously and turned it into a 'human sea' frustrating all heinous designs, including repressive measures and armed attacks, she added.

The opposition leader said more than 100 people were injured.

JUTA demands resignation of Home Minister

By Staff Correspondent

The Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (JUTA) yesterday demanded resignation of the Home Minister for what it called his failure to arrest those responsible for an attack on its members.

The JUTA said that "government-backed terrorists" had carried out the attack on the teachers on July 29.

It blamed the indifference of the government for the existing impasse on the campus and said, "The government should come forward to resolve the crisis."

The teachers also slated the filling of cases by former JUCSU leader Masud Hashan Talukder Liton against ten teachers.

"We will opt arrest if any of our colleagues is detained," the statement said.

They also reiterated their demand for arrest of 21 students against whom criminal charges were brought by the JU authorities following the attack.

The JUTA plans to hold a press conference in Dhaka, protest rallies and hunger strikes to press home its demands.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) observed a one-hour token strike yesterday demanding trial of the 21 students accused of involvement in the July 29 incident.

16-point programme to revamp textiles sector

The Textiles Ministry yesterday put forward to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia a 16-point programme for removing the snags and ensuring a fast growth of country's textile sector, reports UNB.

State Minister for Textiles Maj (Retd) Abdul Mannan explained to the Prime Minister and her Cabinet colleagues a comprehensive plan which the ministry believes can bring about an 'industrial revolution' in the country and help alleviate poverty.

Some high officials were also present during the briefing on the programme at the International Conference Centre.

The 16-point measures are aimed at boosting the textiles sector, which possesses great potential, through rehabilitation of the existing industries

and setting up new units, specially backward-linkage ones.

Expanding the spinning, weaving and finishing industries has become imperative to support the export-oriented readymade garments sector which is already earning a substantial amount of foreign exchange, the Textiles Minister said.

Mannan suggested that prices of raw materials for the textile industries should be brought down to the international levels through reforms in the taxation system for competing in the world market and attracting investors. In this regard, the ministry recommends withdrawal of the high-rate duties and taxes on raw materials and imposition of only a three per cent VAT on products.

Nurses' strike: 112 patients leave DMCH

By Staff Correspondent

Over one hundred patients left the city's government hospitals voluntarily yesterday as nurses continued their strike for the fourth consecutive day protesting a government order to transfer the Directorate of Nursing Services to the Health Directorate.

Our medical college correspondents reported that at least 112 patients left the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday while at least 150 sought discharge from the Mitford Hospital in the last three days.

The patients in the post-operative departments of the eight government hospitals were suffering the most due to the strike. Relatives and doctors were compelled to look after the patients in those departments needing regular blood supplies

Internee docs of Mitford Hospital ransack rooms

By SSMCH Correspondent

Internee doctors at the city's Mitford Hospital went on a rampage on the fourth day of their ongoing indefinite strike.

The trainee doctors of Sir Saitmullah Medical College (SSMC) — who complete their internship at the Mitford Hospital — ransacked rooms of the hospital, including that of the director, demanding allocation of seats in the hostels.

Witnesses said representatives of the Internee Doctors' Association (IDA) who had gone to meet the director regarding their five-point demands were suddenly angered by some comments of the director and started ransacking the rooms at around 1.30 pm.

The IDA struck work August 18 to protest the eviction of 45 female internee doctors from the college students' hall on the ground that they were no longer students.

The nurses of the hospital, who are also on a strike, are said to be occupying the rooms earmarked for the internee doctors.

The IDA is demanding eviction of the nurses from their allocated rooms, sufficient supply of life-saving drugs, and putting an end to harassment by outsiders and meddlers.

The director of the hospital has convened an emergency meeting of the professors today.

Ovi, Guddu sentenced to 17 yrs' RI each

By Staff Correspondent

Golam Faruque Ovi and Imtiaz Ahmed Guddu, two former student leaders, were convicted by the Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka yesterday and sentenced to suffer 17 years' imprisonment each for illegal possession and use of firearms.

Judge Kazi Habbul Awal found Ovi and Guddu guilty of possessing unauthorised arms and firing at the police while resisting arrest. The court sentenced them to ten and seven years' imprisonment on each count. The sentences are to run concurrently.

Ovi and Guddu were arrested in a police raid on

Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University on May 18 last year at the height of a spate in campus violence.

Ramma police, acting on a tip-off, made a surprise swoop on Jagannath Hall and arrested the pair. Both tried to resist arrest but were overpowered by the police. Ovi was nabbed with a loaded pistol while a sawed-off rifle and five bullets were found in Guddu's possession.

Ovi, a student of Sociology of the 1982-83 batch, was a charismatic leader of the pro-BNP Jatayatadi Chhastra Dal (JCD). An unassuming character, he had earned quite a

name for himself.



Golam Faruque Ovi (L) and Imtiaz Ahmed Guddu.

UN aid convoy enters Mostar after 2 months

By Staff Correspondent

MOSTAR (Bosnia), Aug 21: A United Nations advance convoy reached the Muslim sector of the southwestern Bosnian city of Mostar today bringing medical supplies and outside contact for the first time since June, reports Reuter.

Some 35,000 Muslims living in the quarter are desperately short of food, fuel, water and medicines after being cut off by fighting between government forces and rebel Croats.

The UN Protection Force official who led Saturday's convoy compared Mostar's Muslim old town to the Croatian town of Vukovar, which was virtually demolished during Croatia's 1991 war of independence.

Sniper fire raked the Muslim

quarter during the visit, and Unprofor soldiers and officials were forced to scurry past exposed areas or shelter behind Spanish battalion armoured personnel carriers.

The convoy reached the Muslim quarter at around 1230 local time (1030 GMT) and made its delivery to a laboratory built at the turn of the century which is currently serving as the local hospital.

Unprofor civil affairs director Cedric Thornberry, who led the convoy, described the delivery as a "symbolic" gesture, intended to open the way for regular aid convoys.

He said conditions in the Muslim hospital, which has

been hit by sniper fire,

UN resolution on Lanka withdrawn

By Staff Correspondent

COLOMBO, Aug 21: A United Nations resolution opposed by Sri Lanka which called for UN intervention in the island's ethnic conflict has been withdrawn, Foreign Minister Shaukat Hameed said today, reports Reuter.

The motion had been scheduled for debate by the UN sub-commission on discrimination and protection of minorities in Geneva on Friday.

"I believe the withdrawal of the draft resolution indicates the international community has accepted the government was making a genuine attempt to reach a political settlement and that our human rights record had improved," the minister told Reuters.

Missing Lankan fishermen reach Cox's Bazar shore

By Staff Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 21: Four Sri Lankan fishermen, who were lost in the turbulent sea 25 days ago, reached the shore of Cox's Bazar today, reports UNB.

While returning from fishing in the Bay a group of Bangladeshi fishermen found the Sri Lankans in an unconscious state in a small boat floating about 40 miles off the shore this morning.

They took them to their homes and fed them well, but were unable to understand their language as they (Sri Lankans) regained their consciousness.

The Bangladeshi fishermen brought them to Cox's Bazar police station where one of them said in broken English that they are Sri Lankans.

They identified themselves as Mohammad Manjir, 35, son of Noman, R M Senteve, 27, son of R M Gana Samera, K Oitward, 53, son of K Basten and his younger brother K Nimon, 26.

Rain worsens Ctg flood situation

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 21: The flood situation in greater Chittagong deteriorated following more rainfall today.

According to sources, the flooding caused by incessant downpour throughout the day engulfed some fresh areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts.

Chittagong Met office sources said 347 mm rainfall was recorded in the past three days.

The Met office forecast says heavy downpour may continue until tomorrow, which is likely to further aggravate the situation.

Meanwhile, the road communication between Chittagong and Rangamati was also cut off today with the inundation of the road at Isapur. The Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road link, snapped Friday, was yet to be restored because flood water was still flowing over some portions of the road at Kurulia, official sources said.

Several lakh people have reportedly been affected and some thousands rendered homeless.

District administration sources said the situation on Sandwip island had become alarming with most of its unions under almost four feet water.

A tidal surge breached the embankment around the island and most of the areas were



It rained in the city all day yesterday with the Met Office recording 30mm of rainfall in the capital until 6 pm. Heavy downpours were also reported from all parts of the country on the day. —Star photo

Reprisal for Contra abductions

Sandinistas hold Vice President, 33 opposition leaders hostage

MANAGUA (Nicaragua), Aug 21: Heavily armed Sandinista supporters held the vice president and 33 other opposition leaders hostage early Saturday and said they wouldn't be freed until former Contra rebels released dozens of hostages abducted in the north, reports AP.

At least 20 gunmen brandishing AK-47 rifles and hand grenades took the members of the National Opposition Union hostage and warned police not to storm the party's one-story headquarters in a house near the city centre.

After one burst of gunfire, a

hostage-taker was wounded by a police bullet and windows were shattered as authorities tried to approach, pro-Sandinista Radio Ya said. It was the only known casualty in the crisis.

The captives included Vice President Virgilio Godoy and Alfredo Cesar, a former Contra leader based in Miami during Nicaragua's civil war and now a deputy of the opposition union, known by its Spanish acronym UNO.

"Don't shoot!" Cesar pleaded on a live TV broadcast from inside the building showing him

and several trembling hostages laying down beside the walls.

Gunmen in green uniforms and white bandanas brandished rifles and were seen using walkie-talkies in the broadcast by independent pro-Sandinista Channel Four. They lectured the opposition leaders on their 'political mistakes.'

"People are dying of hunger in Nicaragua because of people and politicians who sell out their country," they said.

Apparently police were attempting to close in as Cesar shouted 'loudly, 'Move away!' —Star photo

West Bengal Cong-I leader killed

CALCUTTA, Aug 21: The West Bengal Pradesh Congress-I organising secretary, Utpal Bhowmik and a Seva Dal worker were killed and another person was injured when unidentified militants attacked them in Shibpur area under Howrah district last night, reports PTI.

The DIG headquarters, S I S Ahmed, said today that the Congress-I workers were attacked with bombs and pipeguns around 2130 hours to 2200 hours while they were sitting inside a garage.

Ahmed said that Bhowmik succumbed to his injuries at the hospital while the other person died on the spot. The injured worker was being treated at the hospital.

Li Peng 'ill'

BEIJING, Aug 21: Chinese Premier Li Peng missed a key cabinet meeting and was described officially today as "ailing" despite having been pictured recently relaxing in his swimming trunks at a Communist Party beach resort, reports Reuter.

The conflicting messages about Li's health underscore persistent speculation that his purported illness may be as much political as it is physical.

The 65-year-old headline premier dropped from sight in April and was said to be suffering from a cold, but Beijing later said he had suffered an unexplained heart ailment. Li has made only two public appearances since then, the most recent in late June.

In an apparent bid to quash rumours of serious illness, the Communist Party flagship people's daily and other major papers last week published a snapshot of a smiling, swi-swallowed Li standing in the surf at the party's Beidaihe beach resort.

Hekmatyar warns Russia not to repeat mistake

By Staff Correspondent

TEHRAN, Aug 21: Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has demanded that Moscow withdraw its forces from the Afghan-Tajik border and warned it not to repeat the mistakes of its Afghan invasion, IRNA news agency reported Friday, says AFP.

The official news agency quoted Hekmatyar, who arrived here Wednesday for an official visit, as saying the border crisis "will be solved only through a consensus" between the Tajik government and opposition groups.

Islamic Tajik opposition groups based in Afghanistan have in recent months been launching attacks on the Dushanbe government and Russian troops stationed on the Tajik-Afghan border, prompting reprisals by the Russians last month which killed hundreds of civilians in Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar blamed the developments in Tajikistan and Russia's "savage attacks" on the

Afghan border for the delay in freeing Russian prisoners of war captured during the 1979-1989 occupation by the former Soviet Union.

He said a tripartite agreement had been signed between Tehran, Kabul and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to facilitate the return before the onset of winter of more than two million Afghan refugees currently in Iran.

"We have asked for proper conditions for the return of refugees and for mechanisms to be set up to answer their complaints," he said.

Tehran and Kabul have also agreed to set up an anti-narcotics committee to expedite their campaign against drug trafficking in the region.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are major sources of various drugs — mainly heroin, morphine and opium — which are smuggled into Iran en route to Europe via Turkey.



Relatives of four Islamic militants crying in pain after being told that the suspects were sentenced to death for murder, armed robbery and plotting to overthrow the Egyptian government by a military court in Cairo yesterday. Story on Page 5 — AFP photo