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NOTICE Tomorrow's issue of The Daily Star will carry an exclusive, in-depth interview with Dr Kamal Hossain in which he talks to our senior staff about his future political plans. Don't miss it!

Inside Today

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Population education in Third World; Vision for the blind and Pregnant teens get a break at Jamaican school Page 8

Metropolitan Dhaka Day by Day



NEWS BRIEFS

BNP confce bodies meet tomorrow A meeting of the service sub-committee of BNP's National Council Preparatory Committee will be held tomorrow at 6 pm at the party central office.

ALCWC meets September 1 Awami League Central Working Committee will meet on September 1 at its party office at 3 pm.

Jamuna erosion hits 3000 SIRAJGANJ, Aug 24: Some 3,000 people of eight villages in two thanas of the district were rendered homeless due to erosion by the river Jamuna in last two days, reports UNB.

Stiff opposition in parliament Cong-I bill to delink politics from religion shelved

NEW DELHI, Aug 24: India's ruling Congress (I) party today put off a parliamentary debate and vote on controversial legal amendments designed to separate religion and politics in the face of stiff opposition, reports AFP. The postponement, announced in the Lower House by Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan, came in the wake of threats by Hindu-revivalist and leftist opposition parties who said they would not support the twin amendments. The fate of the bills, which needed a two-thirds majority support in Parliament to become law, was uncertain and Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao faced the prospect of an embarrassing defeat if they were put of the vote. The Home Minister said the leftist Janata Dal (people's party) had expressed reservations and sought time to reconsider the amendments. He said the government wanted a wider public debate outside Parliament, admitting that the bills, designed to staunch growing Hindu fundamentalism, would not pass muster without leftist support. Only the communists had expressed qualified backing for the legislation which was to be debated and put to vote today. The centrists said they backed the "objective" of the bill but suggested changes. Somnath Chatterjee of the Communist Party of India-Marxist said Chavan had agreed to consider a leftist request to summon a special session of Parliament to debate the bills. Parliament is due to recess at the end of the month. Under the amendments to the Constitution and electoral law, candidates for legislative office would be disqualified, political parties banned and their assets seized if they exploit religion in their election campaigns. Parties will not be allowed to bear religious names or use religious symbols. The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has built its political fortunes by spearheading a Hindu revivalist crusade, said it opposed the legislation, "lock stock and barrel". The centrists had opposed powers the bills would have given to state assemblies and administrative offices to disqualify candidates, and vowed to fight the measures tooth and nail.

Decade action plan for girl child

The Bangladesh Decade Action Plan for the Girl Child 1991-2000 was formally launched in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS. The overall goal of the action plan is to coordinate and strengthen social, legal, educational, health and nutritional programmes and measures aimed at survival, development and protection of the girl child in Bangladesh. The action plan has been adopted on the basis of the spirit and premises of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as those of the SAARC Summit Declaration. The formulation of the plan follows the commitment of Bangladesh to achieving the goals and objectives of the SAARC Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child 1991-2000, prepared in pursuance of the directives of the SAARC Summit in Male (November 1990) and subsequently endorsed by the SAARC Summit in Colombo (December 1991). An official document released on the occasion says, the action plan is the reflection of the commitment of Bangladesh towards improving the conditions of the girl child and raising the status of women. The plan seeks to establish pragmatic efforts focussed on the girl child, and ensure that they were well integrated within the development activities of various social development agencies and thereby ensuring a broad-based social participation in the process of elimination of social injustice and economic exploitation of the girl child, the document said. Launching the action plan at a function held under the aegis of the Ministry of Social

Saudi market reacts to NY Times report

MANAMA, Aug 24: The Saudi market reacted sharply today to a report published in the United States that Saudi Arabia has run down its financial reserves because of years of unrestrained spending. Dealers in the kingdom said people were selling riyals for dollars in hectic trading in the Saudi Riyal Interbank Market. "The market has reacted sharply to the New York Times report. It (the market) is very confusing. It's really very hectic trading," one dealer in Riyadh told Reuters. Trading on the Saudi Riyal Interbank Market is usually quiet and focuses on trading dollars for Riyals. The New York Times said the kingdom has run down its financial reserves because of years of unrestrained spending, huge military purchases and



TURNING ADVERSITY INTO ADVANTAGE: While rest of the capital languished under the wretchedly wet weather of the past few days this little fellow wasn't to be denied his day's 'catch.' The picture was taken yesterday at the city's Ramna Park where the man-made lake has spilled its banks and flooded the lush green lawns. — Star photo

City languishes under wet spell

Several low-lying areas in and around the capital were inundated as heavy rainfall continued for the third consecutive day yesterday, disrupting normal life in the city and elsewhere in the country. The rainfall, occurring under the influence of an active monsoon coupled with a low pressure prevailing over the country, virtually crippled city life and brought most economic activities to a standstill. The Met Office recorded 58mm rain in the capital, the highest during the last 12 hours ending 6 pm Tuesday, forcing city dwellers to remain indoors during the day. Traffic movement was severely disrupted as important roads and intersections including Kakrat, Shantinagar, Eskaton, Rajarbagh, Elephant Road, Kamalapur, Mirpur Section-10, Moghbazar, Gopibagh, Tikatully, Palassy, Gandaria, Postagola, Dhania and other areas had gone under one to two feet deep water. The Met Office forecasts it is likely to rain for another couple of days before gradually stopping afterwards. The Met Office recorded 93mm rainfall in the city from 6 pm Monday to 6 pm yesterday. Till 6 pm Monday 115mm rains fall was recorded in 24 hours while on Sunday it was 27mm. The total amount of rainfall recorded in the capital since Thursday was 315mm. City dwellers remained mostly indoors for the better part of the day yesterday as the roads, due to a poor drainage system, retained rainwater, particularly in the older parts of the capital. The man-made lakes in Ramna, Dhanmondi and Gulshan had risen sharply. The Ramna and Dhanmondi lakes

Taxmen asked to achieve Tk 1900cr revenue target

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has asked the officials to expand the existing tax network to achieve the Tk 1,900 crore revenue earning target fixed in the income tax sector for the current financial year, reports UNB. The Minister was addressing a meeting of the income tax officers of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna divisions in the city yesterday. Rahman said the country achieved 20 per cent, 15 per cent and 12 per cent growth in the export, import and industrial sectors respectively during the last financial year. Besides, the inflation rate has been brought down to 3 per cent, the investment credit process is being accelerated and sick industries rehabilitated. He said despite all these achievements, it was most unfortunate that some opposition quarters were terming the country's economy stagnant. Such irresponsible criticisms only expose the ignorance of the opposition and tarnish the country's image abroad. He pointed out that the IMF, in its latest report, as well as some prestigious world newspapers also appreciated the success achieved by the Bangladesh government in the economic sector.

Strike called off Govt bows to nurses' demand

By Staff Correspondent The week-long strike by the nurses was called off yesterday after the government bowed to their demand of keeping them under the Directorate of Nursing Welfare instead of the Health Directorate. Leaders of the striking nurses said they had withdrawn the strike and joined their duties at the state-run hospitals and medicare centres across the country last evening after the government agreed to rescind an earlier order which sought to place the Nursing Directorate under the Director General of Health. Some 15,000 staff, assistant and student nurses in the government hospitals and clinics stopped work since August 18 demanding cancellation of the government order. They feared that if placed under the Health Directorate, the nurses would be dominated by the doctors and their service prospects adversely affected. The four-hour-long negotiations, which took place at the conference room of the Health Ministry yesterday, ended with a memorandum of understanding between the two parties, meeting sources said. The meeting also decided to form a committee to look into the existing problems in the nursing service, they said. High officials of the ministry and leaders of the agitation — the Bangladesh Diploma Nurses' Association (BDNA) president Kohinor Begum and general secretary M Mofizullah, the Bangladesh Student Nurses' Union president Sultana Shahana and general secretary Shafiqul Islam and the leaders of the Assistant Nurses' Union signed the MOU. Later, the nurses' leaders called on the Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf at his office. The newly-formed committee, headed by the Joint Secretary (Development) of the Health Ministry Dr M Khalidullah, would file its report to the government within three

Halishahar incidents 5 more navymen sacked

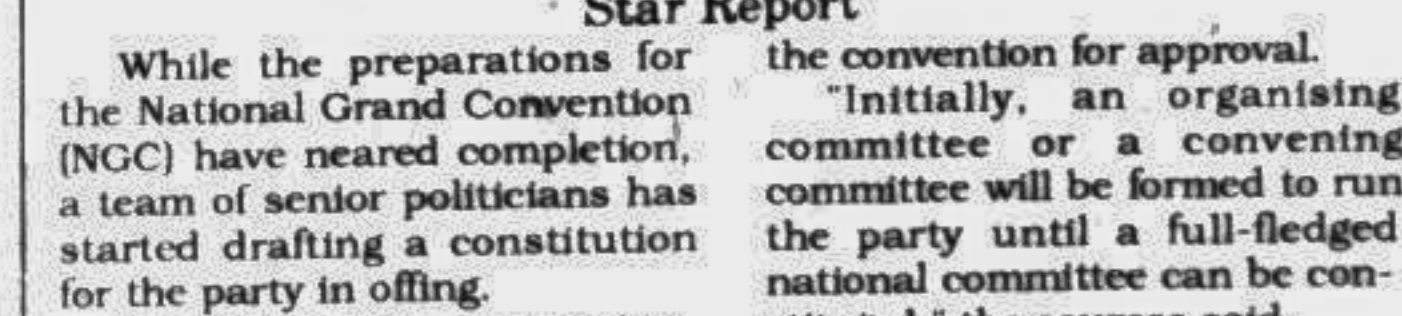
From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Aug 24: Five more Navy personnel were reportedly dismissed for their alleged involvement in the untoward incidents of Bandertilla-Halishahar in the port city last year, reliable sources here said today. The dismissed Navy personnel include one master chief, two chief petty officers and two petty officers. They faced the action recently after seven and a half months of the incidents, dubbed as the nation's 'worst tragedy' that took place on January 2 and 3 last year. Competent sources said the action was taken on the basis of reports of the enquiry commission which probed the Bandertilla-Halishahar incidents. Earlier, 20 Navy personnel including five officers and fifteen sailors were dismissed for their alleged involvement in the incidents at Bandertilla-Halishahar. Sources said some top brass of the Chittagong Naval Base also were reported in the findings of the one-member enquiry commission formed with Justice Sultan Hossain Khan. But the enquiry report is yet to be published. According to official sources, 11 persons were killed and 200 injured in the incidents while unofficial sources pegged the death figure at 18. See Page 12 Col 8

Croats proclaim their own republic

ZAGREB, Aug 24: Bosnian Croat nationalists today proclaimed their own republic within a future Bosnia-Herzegovina federation, reports AFP. A statement issued here by the Croat democratic community (HDZ) party of Mate Boban said the proclamation of the 'Herzeg-Bosnia Croat Republic' was made at a central council meeting of the party, in Livno, 100 kilometres west of Sarajevo. The republic succeeds the 'Herzeg-Bosnia Croat community' earlier proclaimed by the Bosnian Croats who under a Geneva draft peace package would end up with 17 per cent of the former Yugoslav republic. Meanwhile, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic has warned that the Bosnian Muslims could lose even the territory the hold if they reject the Geneva partition plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a statement appearing today in the Serbian daily Dnevnik, Karadzic said that if the Muslim rejected the plan, which would give them 30 per cent of the territory in the former Yugoslav republic, "The Serbs will keep not only the 54 per cent of territory assigned to them in the plan, but also all the areas now under their control." Karadzic said the Muslims now controlled barely 10 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and they would 'risk losing everything' if they rejected the plan. The Geneva talks were now over for the Serbs, Karadzic said adding that he believed they were also over for the Croats. However, Bosnia's Muslim president Alija Izetbegovic was "still waiting for US support," Karadzic said, and if US President Bill Clinton encouraged him not to sign the peace accord 'the much-awaited peace will not come.' Another report says, Bosnian Croats have given in to UN demands and agreed to allow about a week's worth of food to reach Muslims in the ravaged city of Mostar. Disputes, however, held up the convoy. The problems arose after Croats demanded the return of the bodies of fighters killed in Mostar before they will allow the UN vehicles to pass. The 19-truck convoy — carrying 200 tons of food and medical aid — was expected to remain until Wednesday in Medjugorje, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of Mostar, said Cedric Thornberry, the senior civilian UN official in former

Kamal's allies working on party constitution

Star Report While the preparations for the National Grand Convention (NGC) have neared completion, a team of senior politicians has started drafting a constitution for the party in office. The three-day convention, sponsored by Dr Kamal Hossain and his allies, begins in the city Friday. The draft of a document on political and economic situation of the country, to be placed at the NGC, is being given finishing touches by the steering committee for the preparation of the convention. "The document, which pinpoints the problems faced by the nation, also suggests possible solutions," said a member of the committee. He said this document will be the basis of the new party's manifesto. About the constitution of the party, sources said a small team consisting of Barrister Amirul Islam, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Advocate Zahurul Islam and some others have already started working on it. The draft will be given final shape by the steering committee and placed before the subject committee of the convention for approval. "Initially, an organising committee or a convening committee will be formed to run the party until a full-fledged national committee can be constituted," the sources said. The name of the new organisation is yet to be finalised. A number of suggestions are being considered. Replying a question, a source close to Dr Kamal Hossain said that since the delegates at the mini-convention, held earlier this month, opted for launching a new political party, the formation of such an organisation at the forthcoming convention is now certain. Meanwhile, the preparatory committee has announced the itinerary of the NGC to be held at the Institution of Engineers in Dhaka. The convention will be inaugurated at 9:30 am on Friday while the first working session will start at 2:30 pm. Discussion and formulation of organisational programmes will be finalised on the second day while the convention will conclude with a declaration on Sunday morning. See Page 12 Col 6



A Bosnian woman is overcome by emotion yesterday on the sidewalk in front of the Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo, where her son is due to be evacuated to Italy for medical treatment. — AFP photo

Shun destructive agitation: FBCCI chief

By Staff Correspondent The president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Mahbubur Rahman has called upon the political parties for discouraging frequent hartals, work stoppages, strikes, breaking of cars and damage of private and public property during demonstrations. He also called for a dialogue between the government and the opposition to consolidate an enabling environment for a smooth private sector-led economic growth. Rahman made his appeal during a meeting of businessmen, industrialists and chamber leaders with the Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina at a local hotel Monday. He complimented the AL's commitment to a market economy and said political patron-

Diarrhoea claims four more

By Staff Correspondent Another four diarrhoeal deaths and at least 844 new cases of the water-borne disease were reported from around the country during the last 24 hours ending Tuesday, according to the Diarrhoea Control Centre. Two of the deaths were reported from Sunamganj while one each was reported from Comilla and Habiganj districts. The total number of deaths from diarrhoea and intestinal diseases now officially stands at 176 since June 1. Of the total number of new cases reported on the day, Habiganj topped the list with 251, Comilla with 127, Kishoreganj with 51, Chittagong with 43 while 38 new cases of diarrhoea attacks were reported from the Brahmanbaria. See Page 12 Col 6