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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda shocked

Prime Minister and BNP
Chairperson Begum Khaleda
Zia yesterday expressed her
deep shock at the death of
BNP Jhalakha thana unit
president Zahiruddin Ahmed.
In a condolence message
Begum Zia recalled the
contributions of late Ahmed saying
he was a dedicated leader
preaching Bangladeshi national-
ism and the politics of
production. BNP Secretary
General and LGRD and
Cooperatives Minister Abdus
Salam Talukdar also condoled
the death of Zahiruddin
Ahmed. reports BSS.477 tribal refugees
return homeCHITTAGONG, Aug 1: Some
99 families comprising 477
tribal refugees from Indian
state of Tripura today voluntarily
returned to their homes in
Khagrachhari hill district
bringing the total number of
repatriated persons to 2772.
The Khagrachhari control
room sources told BSS here
that this sixth batch under the
second phase of repatriation
was received by Kalparanjan
Chakma MP.Tk 850 for workers'
medical testThe Labour and Manpower
Ministry has informed that an
arrangement has been made for
medical test of the workers
going to Malaysia at BIRDEM
and Holy Family Red Crescent
Hospital at a cost of Taka 850.
Malaysian High Commission in
Dhaka will only accept medical
certificates from these two
hospitals for giving visas. The
measure will be effective im-
mediately. reports BSS.Ministers' pledges take
their time to materialise

By Nurul Kabir

The government has so far
fulfilled only 58 out of 443
pledges made by the ministers
on the floor of the Jatiya
Sangsad (JS) during the first
14 sessions of the country's
present parliament.However, another 183 pro-
jects, undertaken by the
government following pledges
made by ministers in the
House, have so far been im-
plemented partially.These statistics were re-
vealed at a meeting of the JS
standing body on government
pledges held yesterday morning
with its chairman and Chief
Whip of Parliament Khandaker
Delwar Hossain in the chair.The Opposition members of
the eight-man body were not
present.According to meeting
sources, the JS body on govern-
ment pledges is however
yet to receive any information
about the state of implementa-
tion of 202 pledges made by
the cabinet members.Parliament Secretariat sources
said letters had been issued to
the ministries concerned re-
questing them to provide the
JS body with adequate informa-
tion on all the projects but
the ministries are yet to re-
spond accordingly.The cabinet members usually
make commitments in re-
sponse to notices by
Parliament members drawing
the attention of the House to
both national and regional
problems and seeking neces-
sary government measures to
resolve those.All the 443 pledges made
so far relate mostly to develop-
ment issues, ranging from
construction of bridges and
culverts to setting up of tele-
phone exchanges at different
JS constituencies.However, the chief of the
JS body monitoring implementa-
tion progress Khandaker
Delwar Hossain told this cor-
respondent last night that effec-
tive functioning of hiscommittee could contribute a
lot towards making the govern-
ment accountable to
Parliament.The opposition members of
the committee have a very
important role to play in that
respect," the Chief Whip ob-
served.The Opposition parties in
Parliament are on a boycott
since March of both
Parliament sessions and JS
standing body meetings.The pledges committee is
planning to produce a report for
the next session of Parliament.
According to meeting sources, a sub-committee
was formed yesterday to scrutinise
the information gathered so far to prepare a draft
to be placed in the House. The
sub-committee is supposed to
complete scrutiny by the first
week of next month.Yesterday's meeting was at-
tended by the ruling party
members of the committee M
A Matin, Sirajul Islam and
Abdul Wahab.Ministers, state ministers
in charge of different min-
istries and divisions attended
the meeting.Cabinet okays BTV
programmes thru'
'Asiasat' satelliteThe cabinet in a meeting
yesterday approved the pro-
posal for transmission of
BTV programmes via 'Asiasat'
satellite to project Bangladesh
in the region, reports UNB.This will enable Bangladesh
to project development ef-
forts, culture and heritage as
well as educational and enter-
tainment programmes
throughout the Asia-Pacific region.The satellite channel will
also be used to telecast special
programmes for the SAARC
countries.Other countries in the re-
gion such as India, Pakistan and
Myanmar are already using
satellite channels for airing TV
programmes.Prime Minister Begum
Khaleda Zia presided over the
meeting of the cabinet which
also approved amendment to
the Negotiable Instrument Act
1881 and replacement of the
Apprenticeship Ordinance
1962 by the proposed
Apprenticeship Act 1994.Ministers, state ministers
in charge of different min-
istries and divisions attended
the meeting.14 killed in bus plunge
at Sonargaon

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 1: At
least 14 people were killed
when a speeding bus skidded
off the Dhaka-Chittagong high-
way and plunged into a ditch
near Darikanda village in So-
nargaon yesterday.Some 25 passengers tra-
pped inside the ill-fated bus
under water were rescued by
local people and sent to differ-
ent hospitals in Narayanganj and
Dhaka.The rescuers feared the
death toll might rise since the
bus was still under water at the
time of filing this report at 10
last night.It was believed the bus,
owned by a transport agency
Jatri Seba, met the accident
due to mechanical trouble
when it was coming to Dhaka
from Lakshmpur. The bus
sank into six to seven feet un-
der water in the ditch around
4:30 in the afternoon, accord-
ing to witnesses.Local people, police and
Fire Service men rushed to the
spot and launched a rescue
operation which was continu-
ing at the time of filing this report.21 indicted for
Latbagh killingsBy Staff Correspondent
Twentyone people were
indicted yesterday for their al-
leged involvement in the post-
polis violence in the capital's
seven people killed.Public prosecutors framed
the charges in the court of the
Second Additional District and
Sessions Judge, Dhaka.Among the 21 accused, only
five who had been arrested so
far were present in the court.
The others including Alhaj
Abdul Aziz, a defeated ward
commissioner candidate in the
January 30 polls, were still at
large. Aziz is the main accused
in the case.A source said, Public
Prosecutor Abdur Razzak
drafted the charges and
Assistant Public Prosecutor
Mahboob Ahmed appeared in
the court for framing the
charges.Charges were brought under
sections 148 (for rioting
being armed with deadly
weapons), 149 (for unlaw-
ful assembly), 302 (for com-
mitting murders) and 307 (for
attempt to murder) of the
Bangladesh Penal Code (BPC).

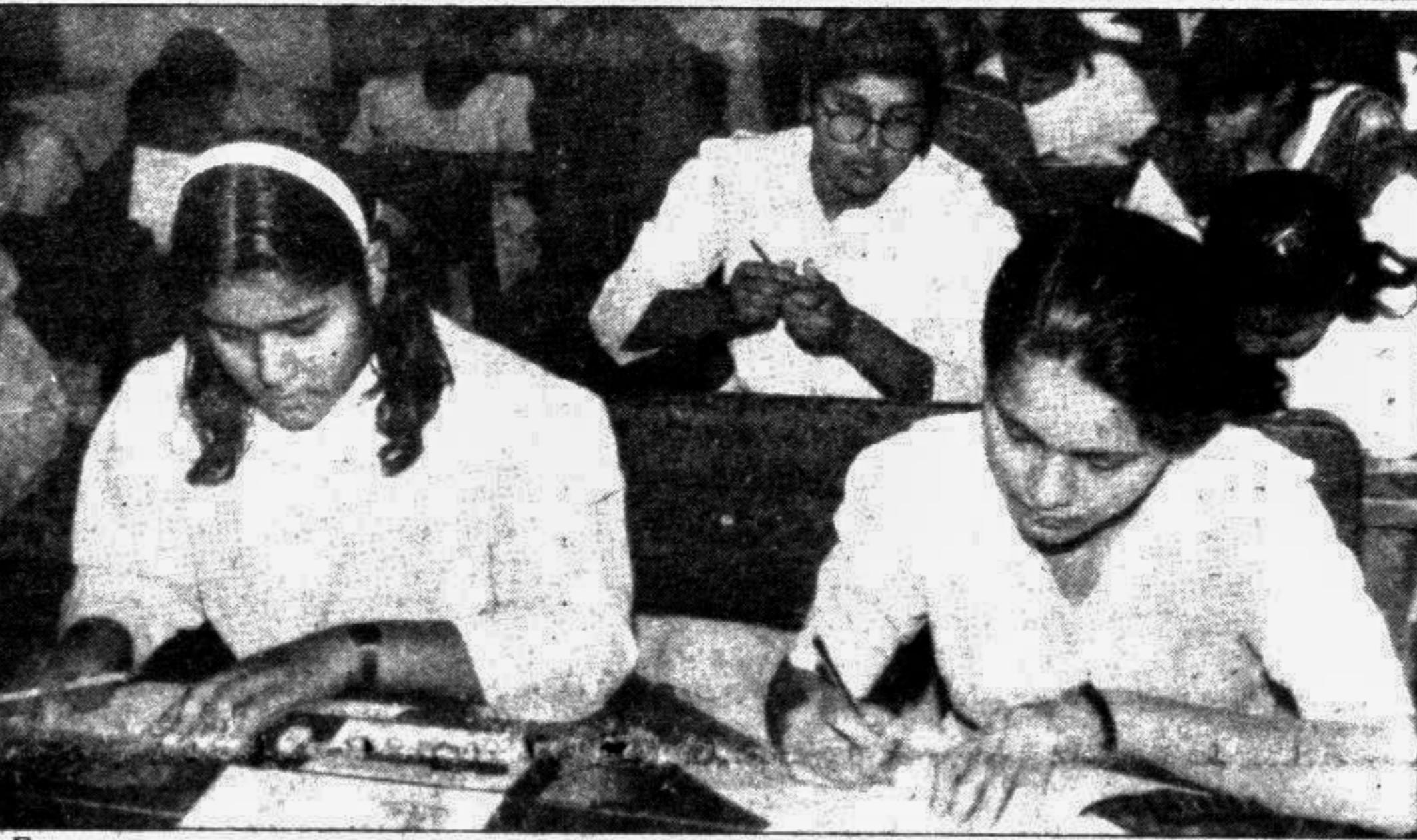
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A 'white elephant' in
its death throes

By Sharier Khan

Production at the Tk 2,000
crore Machine Tools Factory in
Gazipur has stopped since July
14 and over 90 per cent of its
employees have been re-
trenched.But the government is yet
to decide the fate of the fac-
tory described as a "white ele-
phant" by Industries Minister
A M Zahiruddin Khan. The fac-
tory has not been officially de-
clared closed.The minister, when con-
tacted, told The Daily Star that
the government is trying to
find alternative ways to use the
machinery at the factory with-
out further burdening the na-
tional exchequer.

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Examinees at a city centre on the first day of the countrywide HSC examinations yesterday. — Star photo

1295 expelled on first
day of HSC exams

By Staff Correspondent

At least 1295 examinees
were expelled for adopting
unfair means on the first day of
the Higher Secondary Certifi-
cate (HSC) examinations
yesterday, according to reports
received till 11 last night.The examination of Bengali
first paper was held on the day
in a peaceful manner.A total of 4,08,045 HSC exam-
inees were enrolled this
year under the four education
boards of the country.Of the expelled examinees,
240 were reported in Dhaka,
196 from Comilla, 790 from
Rajshahi and 69 from Jessor. Besides,
an invigilator at a
Gairbandha centre under the
Rajshahi Board was also ex-
pelled.

Examinees at a city centre on the first day of the countrywide HSC examinations yesterday. — Star photo

Education Minister Jamil
uddin Sircar visited the
examination centre at Dhaka
College in the capital. He
talked to the examinees and
others welfare.Chairman of the Dhaka
Board Prof. Latifur Rahman and
the Deputy Commissioner of
Dhaka were present during the
minister's visit.According to the control
room of the Dhaka Board 240
candidates were expelled from
210 centres of the board yes-
terday.

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BSRS in a dilemma

By Sohel Manzur

The Bangladesh Shilpa Rin
Sangstha (BSRS) is still unde-
cided about what to do with the
factory described as a "white ele-
phant" by Industries Minister
A M Zahiruddin Khan. The fac-
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SAARC Secy Gen Silwal tells The Daily Star
Bilateral issues best avoided

By M Anwarul Haq

Contentious bilateral issues
among the member-countries
should not be raised or in-
cluded in SAARC forums.These outstanding matters
should rather be discussed at
bilateral levels outside the
purview of SAARC.This was stated by Yadav
Kant Silwal, Secretary General
of the 7-nation South Asian
Association for Regional Coop-
eration (SAARC) in an interview
with The Daily Star in Dhaka
yesterday.Silwal said it was an unde-
nable fact that the member
states were confronted with
many contentious bilateral is-
sues, but the regional body
would have failed to attain the
current level of cooperation had
the SAARC charter contained
provisions for discussion of inter-state problems.This was stated by Yadav
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current level of cooperation had
the SAARC charter contained
provisions for discussion of inter-state problems.ing to promote economic and
social cooperation. Otherwise
we may be marginalised."Silwal said the issues of
trade, i.e. SAPTA and a com-
mon stance on poverty alleviation,
are now being earnestly pursued by
the SAARC states. He expressed his belief that
the first round of negotiations on
SAPTA will end within
September and that the trade
concessions would be operative
by the end of next year as
envisioned. He pointed out that
Nepal and Sri Lanka had already
ratified the agreement.The Secretary General
mentioned that the impor-
tance of the 'pro