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NEWS BRIEFS

PM congratulates youth cricket team

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday congratulated all members and officials of the Bangladeshi youth cricket team, who clinched the seven-nation International Youth Cricket Championship in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur Sunday.

In a message sent to team manager Enayet Hossain Siraj, the Prime Minister said, "We feel very happy and proud as Bangladeshi boys lifted the title in the seven-nation tournament displaying emulating performance," reports BSS.

Ctg port staff on hunger strike

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 8: The Chittagong port employees' joint seniority and time-scale action coordination committee began a hunger strike at the port office premises this morning, demanding implementation of joint seniority and time-scale benefits as per the verdict of the High Court and solemnana.

Weekly cabinet meet held

The regular weekly meeting of the cabinet was held yesterday at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. Ministers, state ministers in-charge of different ministries and divisions attended the meeting. Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and secretaries concerned were present, reports UNB.

US top official meets Mostafiz

Visiting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Timothy M Carney yesterday made a courtesy call on Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman at the Foreign Office. Carney, who is in Dhaka now on a four-day visit, also called on Foreign Secretary Mr Osmany at the latter's office yesterday, reports BSS.

Drought-like situation threatens Aman crop

By Inam Ahmed

Is a drought impending? This has now become the main concern of the country's farmers and agriculture experts.

The threat of a drought looms large over the country's northern region unless there is a significant increase in rainfall in the next few days, agriculturists feel.

They are now anxiously looking at the skies in the hope of torrential showers that will enable them to transplant their aman paddy seedlings.

Unless the rainfall increases by 30 to 40 per cent from the current level, 20 per cent of the transplanted aman would not survive without supplementary irrigation," said Dr

Z Karim, Member (Soil) of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), while talking to The Daily Star.

If the rain comes, the area under aman plantation will not shrink. But then we have to watch for the month of September because usually droughts come after the middle of September. So we can't really heave a sigh of relief before that," he said.

A weather expert told The Daily Star last night: "The northern region is virtually dry now."

Meanwhile, out of the 50 lakh-hectare aman plantation target this year, 9.86 lakh hectares were brought under plantation till July 31, according to Agriculture Ministry

sources.

The plantation season began in July and will continue till the last week of August. The achievement till the end of July is, however, only five per cent lower than the slightly over 10 lakh hectares last year.

During the same period this year, 2.55 lakh hectares of seed beds were prepared compared to last year's 2.59 lakh hectares.

But the most striking feature this year has been the fact that almost two lakh hectares of the total 9.86 lakh hectares were brought under plantation only with the help of irrigation.

"This is unimaginable," said an official on condition of

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US Secretary of State Warren Christopher (C) watches Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan (R) and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (L) cutting the ribbon to open the first border crossing near the Red Sea resorts of Eilat in Israel and Aqaba in Jordan yesterday.

— AFP photo

Israel and Jordan open border crossing

ISRAEL-JORDAN BORDER, Aug 8: Israel and Jordan changed the map of the Middle East today, opening their first border crossing to cement an end to 46 years of hostilities, report Reuter AP.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan cut the ribbon at the border crossing three km north of the Red Sea ports of Aqaba in Jordan and Eilat in Israel.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher watched as an announcer told the assembled crowd: "Ladies and gentlemen, the border crossing between Israel and Jordan is now open."

Speaking in Hebrew, only one remarkable development here where minefields were cleared up to the last minute,

Hassan quoted from the Bible, saying the events were "turning the valley of troubles into a gate of hope."

Rabin, the first Israeli head of government to officially set foot on Jordanian soil, and Christopher, shared the rostrum with Hassan as some 1,000 Israelis and Jordanians sat together in a wooden grandstand. They wore white baseball caps to protect them from scorching heat.

"This is the first step on a long journey," Rabin said, as he quavered with critics who questioned the rapid pace of Israel's deal-making with the Arabs. "To prevent loss and sorrow we cannot afford to wait one day longer."

A dozen Jordanian and Israeli war veterans shook hands and exchanged gifts. Two young

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girls, Zora Ginzburg, 10, a Kibbutz child, and Nancy Tayan, 12, of Aqaba, presented shears on velvet pillows for Rabin and Hassan to cut the white ceremonial ribbon.

The border opening, which cannot be used by Israelis and Jordanians until there is a formal peace treaty, is one byproduct of the war-no-more agreement King Hussein and Rabin signed two weeks ago at the White House in Washington.

Christopher, who is in the midst of another burst of shuttle diplomacy to try to broaden the peace-making, said the event lifts the spirits of a wounded region by reminding it of the courage and honour, the compassion and sacrifice that two people can demonstrate.

Over 5.63 lakh pounds of processed froglegs worth about seven crore 50 lakh taka, belonging to six private companies, are now stored in various warehouses. Of this stock, over 35 thousand pounds are in possession of a private company while the rest are in bonded warehouses under supervision of the Customs Department.

Christopher also expressed the desire to hold similar meetings with other political parties.

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WASA yet to respond to their plight

By Asluzzaman

"If I pump my tubewell, fitted with the WASA line, I get dirty, stinking water. Possibly the water and sewerage lines have leakages somewhere in the area," said a resident of Baddanagar Lane under Lalbagh thana in the city.

Despite repeated complaints during the past one month, the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is yet to check the lines and restore supply of fresh water, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We fetch our drinking water from a roadside hydrant," he said, pointing to a long queue near the faucet.

At least 50 families in the area have been suffering without any sign of a solution to the problem. The water flow is so poor that we have to use tube wells to draw water from the WASA line," he further said.

Shujauddin, a banker residing in the area, said "Poor supply or scarcity is tolerable but how can we drink highly contaminated water?" Some people have already fallen sick due to this, he said.

A Daily Star correspondent and a photographer visited the area and saw the suffering of the local people.

Another resident, Abdul

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TOO LITTLE FOR TOO MANY: A common, everyday sight with people forming long queues around such water hydrants, especially in the older part of the city. This picture was taken yesterday at Baddanagar Lane in Lalbagh.

— Star photo by Enamul Huq

HC refers case against BBC, two ministries to CJ

A High Court bench, expressing its embarrassment in accepting a writ petition against the BBC, the Home Ministry, Ministry of Information, and controversial feminist author Taslima Nasreen, referred the case to the Chief Justice yesterday for his decision, reports UNB.

One of the judges of the court comprising Justice Kazi Shafiquddin and Justice A T M Monwaruddin felt "embarrassed" and decided to refer the petition, filed against a BBC telecast of an interview with Nasreen for its presentation according to the Chief Justice's own direction.

Amena Khatun, General Secretary of the Swadeshi Party, filed the case after failing to get any satisfactory answers to her legal notices served earlier on the plaintiffs.

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Move to restore normalcy on DU campus

by Masud Arif

Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, in a move to restore normalcy on the still tense campus, began a dialogue with the student leaders yesterday as part of a planned series of talks with representatives of the teachers, students and officials.

Well placed university sources said that the seven-day ban on rallies and processions on the campus imposed Saturday might be withdrawn if the student bodies reached a consensus.

The VC's talks with the student leaders continued till the writing of this report last night.

Sources concerned indicated that the talks might have a positive outcome — possibly

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AL, EC discuss delimitation of JS constituencies

A high-powered Awami League delegation yesterday met Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf and discussed delimitation of the 300 parliamentary constituencies, reports UNB.

They also discussed the formulation of a new voters' list and distribution of identity cards among the voters, said an EC press release.

Awami League's Advisory Council member Md Afzal Rahaman led the delegation which included Rahmat Ali MP, K S Nabi, A S H K Sadeq and Mahbubur Rahaman.

Election Commissioner Justice Md Abdul Jalil, EC Secretary A Z M Shamsul Alam and Joint Secretary S M Jakaria took part in the discussion at the EC Secretariat.

They also expressed the desire to hold similar meetings with other political parties.

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Hasina expresses solidarity

Non-govt pry teachers start fast unto death from today

By Staff Correspondent

The teachers of non-government primary schools yesterday decided to start a fast unto death in the city from today if their four-point demand was not met.

Earlier, the striking teachers decided to continue their sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club till Wednesday and threatened to go on a hunger strike from Thursday if their demands were not accepted by the government.

The teachers of the non-government primary schools have been demanding nationalisation of all registered non-

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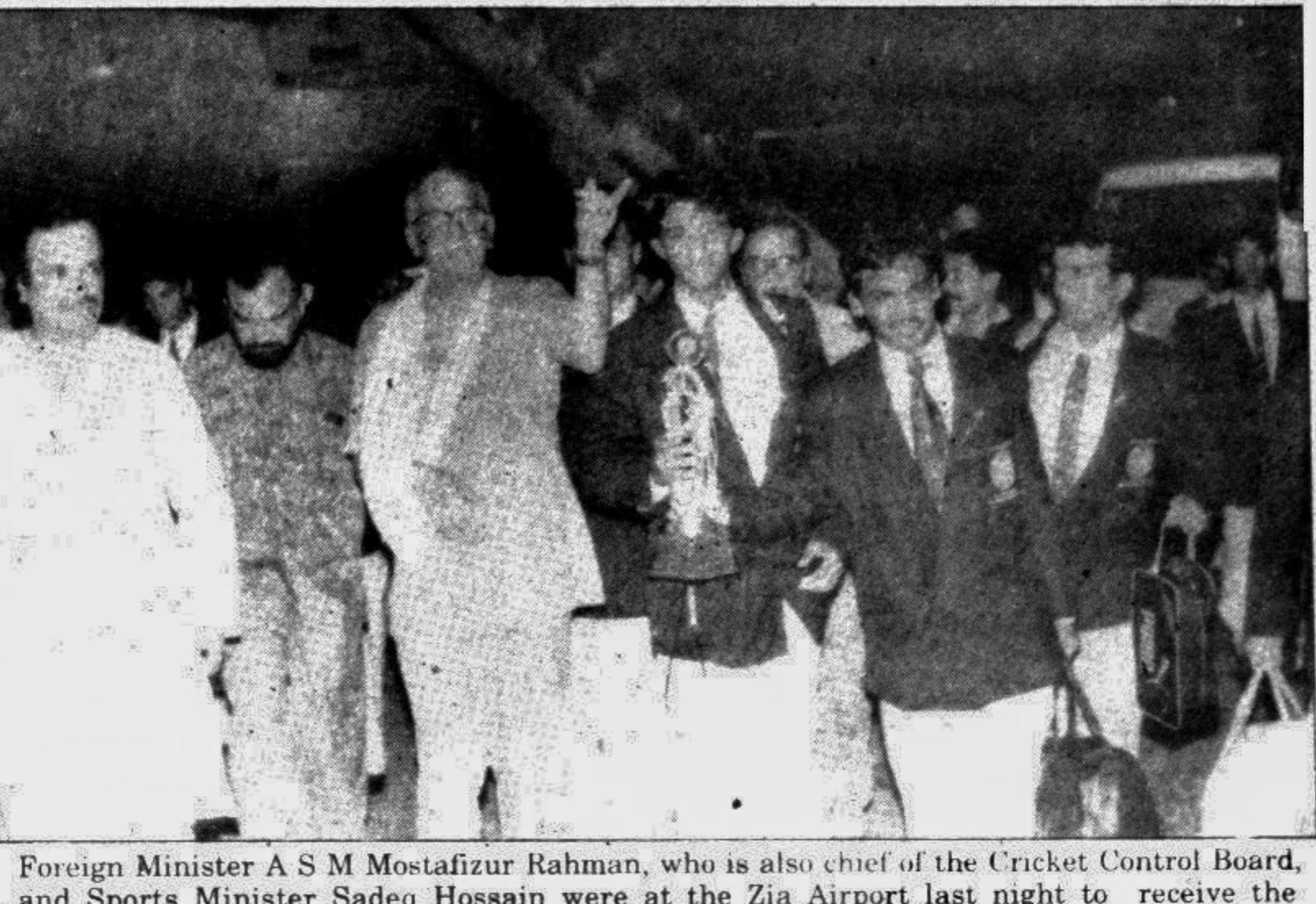
One arrested in constable murder case

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested the alleged killer of constable Ali Ahmed from a house in Badda under Gulshan Thana Sunday evening. Ahmed was killed more than five years ago.

According to police, Zakir Hossain alias Milton was arrested on a charge of killing the guard of the Thai Embassy, Ahmed in May, 1989. He is also accused of hijacking a car from Motijheel on the same

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Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, who is also chief of the Cricket Control Board, and Sports Minister Sadeq Hossain were at the Zia Airport last night to receive the victorious Bangladesh youth team which won a seven-nation cricket tournament in Malaysia Sunday.

— Star photo

BNP steps up efforts to end impasse

Star Report

The top-ranking leaders would sit to finalise matters," he told The Daily Star.

He, however, admitted that not much progress has so far been made.

The major Opposition parties — the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and Jamaat — have been agitating for holding the next general elections under a caretaker government.

"We can discuss the outline of a caretaker government but the ruling party should first agree to the caretaker provision," an AL leader said.

Talking to The Daily Star, both the BNP and the Opposition leaders could not give any clear-cut idea about formal talks to end the political

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Miladunnabi August 21

Eid-e-Miladunnabi will be observed in the country on August 21. The National Moon-sighting Committee decided yesterday after reviewing reports regarding sighting of the Rabul Awwal moon from different districts, reports BSS.

The National Moon-sighting Committee, at its meeting with Religious Affairs Minister Keramat Ali in the chair, decided that the Rabul Awwal moon was not sighted anywhere in Bangladesh yesterday.

The meeting, therefore, resolved that the first day of the lunar month of Rabul Awwal will start on August 10.

Saifur seeks US aid for rural electrification

The visiting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Timothy M Carney, called on Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, at his secretariat office in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

They discussed bilateral issues and matters of mutual interest. Carney praised Bangladesh for the progress achieved in the ongoing reform process in different sectors.

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3 Pakistanis held with medicine at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

A Customs surveillance team seized contraband medicine valued at Tk 3,14,860 and arrested three persons at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.