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NEWS BRIEFS

**DCC request to
political parties**

The Dhaka City Corporation has requested all political parties of the country to hold public meetings at north and south gates of Baitul Mukarram, Bangabandhu Avenue area, Gulistan Square and northern side of the Press Club until venues for public meetings are selected. A press release said the ever increasing population of the city was creating traffic jams on these important roads and it had become a regular phenomena resulting sufferings of the people in their movement in the city areas. reports BSS.

**Dr Kamal leaves
for NY**

Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain left Dhaka yesterday for New York to attend the biennial conference of the International Law Association. He will present a report on international law and sustainable development at the conference as its president. reports BSS.

**335 more Rohingyas
go home**

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 10: Some 335 Rohingya refugees today voluntarily went back to their homes in Myanmar bringing the total number of repatriated persons to 60630. At present 1,90,247 refugees are living in 20 general camps of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts, of whom about ten thousand refugees are awaiting repatriation. reports BSS.

**Canada lauds
govt role**

Canada appreciated the role of the Bangladesh government in handling the case of Taslima Nasreen, according to diplomatic sources. reports BSS.
Canada fully respects the process of the rule of law of Bangladesh. The protection provided by the government to her in compliance with the court's decision, has also been favourably received in Canada. the sources added.

No restriction on her movements : Government Taslima in Sweden

By Staff Correspondent



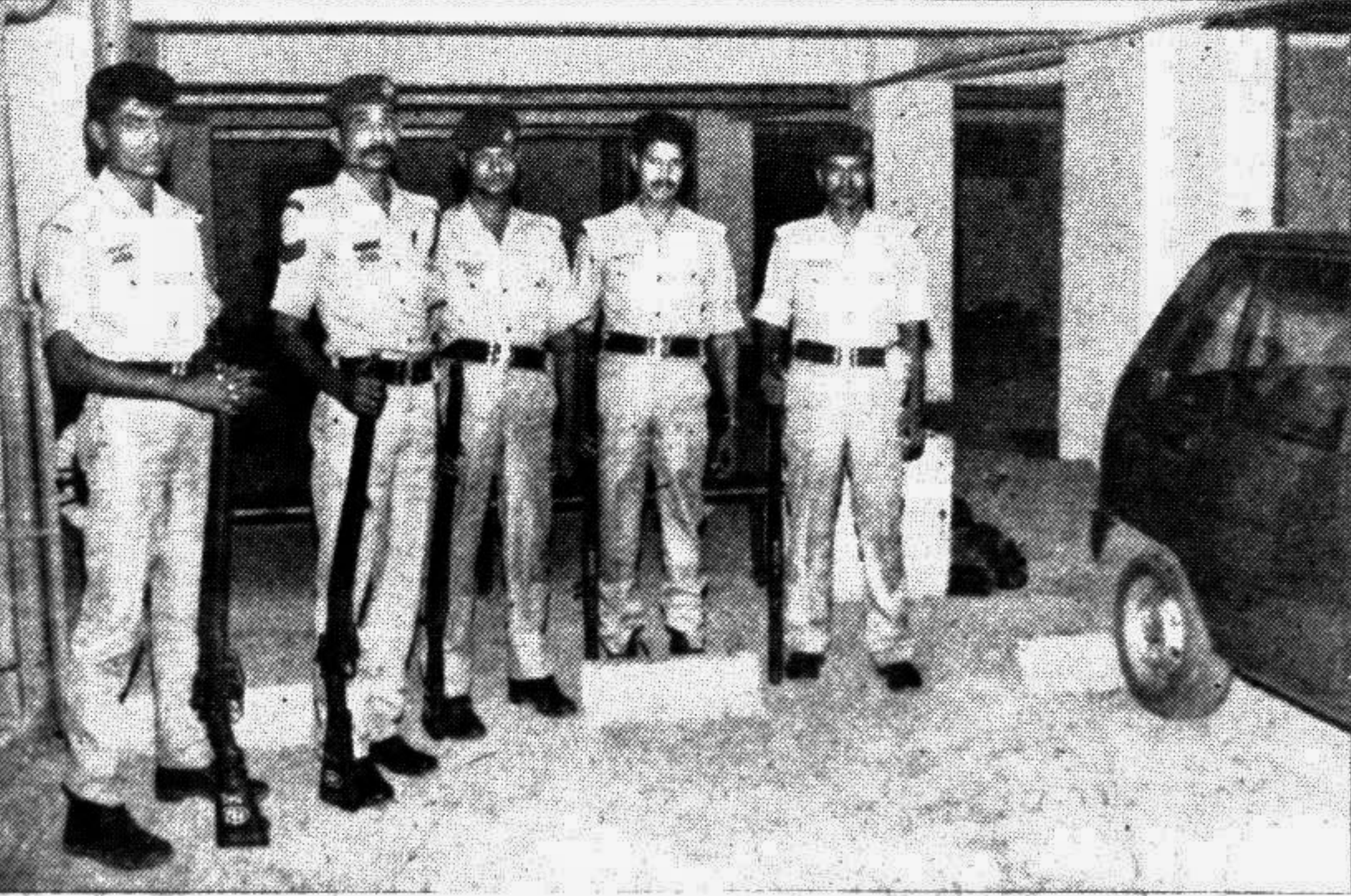
Taslima Nasreen

After raising a storm of controversy, Taslima Nasreen quietly left the country in a veil of secrecy Tuesday for the Swedish capital Stockholm. Home Ministry officials yesterday confirmed that the 32-year-old writer, who was granted anticipatory bail by the High Court last week on charges of hurting the religious feelings of the people, had indeed flown out of the country. They noted that she has been holding a valid Bangladeshi passport and that there had been no restriction on her movements, as long as she abided by the bail conditions.

Nasreen reportedly took a Thai International flight to

Bangkok and agency reports later quoted the Swedish Foreign Minister as confirming her arrival in Stockholm. Various government agencies, including the airport immigration authority and the Foreign Ministry, remained tight-lipped and refused to comment on her departure. All enquiries were directed towards the Home Ministry, where officials would simply confirm that she had left the country and were reluctant to give any other details. Home Minister Abdul Matin Choudhury was not available for comments till the writing of this report late last night. When his attention was

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Police guarding the residence of Taslima Nasreen in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Commentary

Doctors forget their noble oath

By Mahfuz Anam

For all of the last 24 hours the members of the noble profession who have sworn to uphold the 'Hippocratic oath' did not treat their patients. Disease-stricken people continued to suffer their pain and misery — with the risk of infections getting worse, even to the point of becoming fatal — and our dear doctors just couldn't care less. They had their score to settle with the government.

Why didn't the ordinary people get any treatment yesterday in any of the government hospitals? Because the government caught a few of the doctors absenting themselves from their duties in a hospital in Gazipur (near Dhaka) and took the stern action of suspending them. Doctors say that the move is a conspiracy — Oh! one more conspiracy — to spoil their im-

age. Does the BMA think that the strike action will improve the doctors' image? The 'conspiracy' is that the vigilance team was formed on July 28, the visit took place on the 31st, and the suspension came on August 3. Well, to us in the media, it looks more like the government has, for once, acted timely. And if finding out who is doing his job and who is not, is a 'conspiracy', then let us have more of them.

The BMA finds the government's decision to be unjust. As a journalist I respect that position and accept it as another point of view. But what we do not accept, and we think we echo the views of our readers in saying this, is that the doctors have any right to hold the patients hostage to force the BMA's point of view upon us all. Innocent people,

the ordinary taxpayers, are being made to suffer so that the government is forced to change its mind. This is nothing but a brutal show of collective strength with 'innocent human lives on the line.'

I agree that the government should have issued a show cause notice before suspending the absentee doctors. But that does not in any way justify the decision of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) to punish the ordinary people who need medical services urgently.

The moral bankruptcy of this move lies in the fact that the rich and powerful did, no doubt, get their medical attention during the last 24 hours. It was only the poor and the powerless who were victimised by this move. Oh, yes, the BMA had been generous

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Hospitals to get doctors for only 8 hrs daily

By Staff Correspondent

Suffering of the patients mounted as doctors observed a 24-hour strike in all government hospitals and health care centres across the country yesterday.

During the strike, called by the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), doctors performed only emergency duties.

From today, the hospitals, instead of round-the-clock attendance by the doctors, would have their services for only eight hours a day till August 16. The doctors also plan a 48-hour strike on August 17 and 18 protesting suspension of 12 physicians of the Tongi and Gazipur hospitals and to press for the implementation of their 21-point

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Climatic changes to wreak havoc in South Asia

WASHINGTON, Aug 10: Global warming and an accompanying rise in sea levels could wreak havoc in southern Asia, possibly producing millions of "environmental refugees," climate experts said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The Climate Institute is to release a study tomorrow that was conducted over 27 months by more than 60 experts and eight Asian governments, and coordinated by the institute. The institute in a statement said the study projects "major dislocations from climate change and sea level rise throughout south and southeast Asia."

In Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, coastal areas may be flooded

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Non-govt primary teachers call off strike

By Staff Correspondent

The teachers of non-government primary schools called off their fast unto death programme yesterday at the request of Workers' Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, MP.

Some 250 primary school teachers began their hunger strike in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city Tuesday morning to press home a four-point demand.

Earlier, the teachers staged a three-day sit-in at the same venue from Saturday.

Their demands include nationalisation of all registered non-government primary schools and a monthly government grant of Taka 1500 for each teacher until the schools are nationalised. The teachers now get a monthly grant of Tk 500.

The 34-hour hunger strike ended after Menon offered soft

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The 70th birthday of painter S M Sultan was celebrated at his residence in 'Narail' under the auspices of the Shilpakala Academy yesterday. Here the artist (left) is seen receiving a portrait of himself drawn by Munia (extreme right) from Narayanjanj. —Star p'note by Enamul Huq

Country experiencing 'erratic weather'

By Asiuzzaman

The country is experiencing an 'erratic weather behaviour' which is causing very scanty rainfall this monsoon, a weather expert said yesterday.

"Monsoon could not be re-activated over mainland Bangladesh because of extreme Tibetan high pressure system which moved southward," said Deputy Director of the Meteorological Department Sajedur Rahman.

"But it is too early to call it a drought", he told The Daily Star.

The Met official said this erratic weather behaviour is 'unusual but not uncommon'. In the past, such weather behaviour was noticed many times and in future also, it will continue to occur, he added.

"Activity of monsoon and monsoon depression are the

two major sources of rainfall in this season but unfortunately both the systems were absent in July," the meteorologist said.

Contrary to this a number of low pressure developed over the North-West Bay causing heavy rainfall in parts of India, he pointed-out.

The Met official said that the monsoon had set in well on June 5 and during the month the rainfall was near normal all over the country. But in July, rainfall activity became alarmingly low when Rajshahi Division recorded an average of 150 mm rain as against the expected normal 395 mm. It was 62 per cent below the earlier forecast, he added.

Dhaka Division also had a

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Microwave link to monitor cyclones opens

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated microwave link between the Storm Warning Centre, Dhaka and the radar stations at Cox's Bazar and Khepura to monitor the movement of cyclones formed in the Bay of Bengal, reports UNB.

Begum Zia switched on the computers installed at the Bangladesh Meteorological Department at Agargaon in the city for regular monitoring of radar images collected by the two radar stations for improving cyclone forecasting and warning system.

The Tk 38-crore project, built with grant assistance of Tk 28 crore from Japan, will enable the meteorologists pinpoint the exact position of cyclones formed in the Bay and forecast its landfall area accurately.

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Sale of seven textile units finalised

By Soheli Manzur

The government's privatisation programme is likely to gain momentum with the disinvestment of seven public sector textile mills soon, according to official sources.

The process of disinvesting the mills has almost been completed and two of those may even be handed over to the buyers by the end of this month.

The mills being privatised are the Bangladesh Textile Mills, Sharmin Textile Mills, Jofain Textile Mills, Madaripur Textile Mills, Barisal Textile Mills, Kishoreganj Textile Mills and the Kohinor Textile Mills.

According to sources at the Privatisation Board, the government has already approved the tenders submitted by the prospective buyers and issued letters of intent to them.

Some of the buyers have

even made advances as down payment for purchasing the units.

Cases of the other units are either at the negotiation stage or in the stage of stock-taking with the inventories of assets and liabilities being finalised.

Expressing satisfaction at the progress made towards privatisation of the textile mills, an official of the Privatisation Board said the success in disinvesting these mills would have a very good impact on the privatisation process as a whole.

The official, requesting anonymity, identified poor response from the buyers and the huge difference between the estimated price and the quoted prices of the units as two major reasons for the de-

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Killers of Mujib must be tried, says Hasina

TUNGIPARA, Aug 10: Sheikh Hasina today said trial of the killers of 'Father of the Nation' Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman must be held to restore the spirit of the Liberation War and ensure rule of law in the country, reports UNB.

The Awami League president was addressing a crowd at Takerhat on her way to Tungipara where she inaugurated a week-long mourning programme under the auspices of the Awami League Central Working Committee to commemorate the death of Bangabandhu.

Hasina blamed the post 75 regimes for rehabilitating the killers Bangabandhu.

She also criticised the BNP government for not fulfilling its commitment to scrap the Indemnity Ordinance that blocked the trial of Mujib's killers.

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Heart hospital needs check-up!

By Masud Hasan Khan and Inam Ahmed

Since the number of heart patients is increasing at an alarming rate — almost quadrupling every 10 years — the country's lone heart institute in the capital needs to be modernised for combating the killer disease, cardiac specialists and heart experts feel.

The National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) is the only hospital in the country where heart operations are performed. Doctors, however, point out that it needs more essential equipment to treat patients and the existing ones also need proper maintenance.

The hospital's eco-cardiogram machine that gives live images of the heart has

become old and doctors feel a new machine must replace it. The 'stress test machine' used to monitor the heart condition of patients under stress is, too, in a poor condition which, doctors feel, has become unreliable. There is no halter monitoring machine to observe the heart functioning of a patient while he does his daily works and the 'angiogram' machine has recently been repaired.

The maintenance of all these equipment need to be improved to avoid their long non-operation once they break down, doctors of the institute say.

The lack of expertise and equipment has limited the range of heart surgery at the hospital.

Patients with heart problems at birth can be treated and valve operations are conducted here. Some by-pass operations are carried out on an experimental basis. Arrhythmic, neo-natal and paediatric operations are not performed. Hence, the heart patients needing major operations have to go abroad for treatment.

"The scenario at the institute is sad," says an NICVD cardiologist on condition of anonymity. "Our hospital was one of the oldest in the region

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Inside one of the wards of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases — popularly known as the Suhrawardy Hospital — in the city. —Star photo

Row over 'no' to F-16 supply US must return money, says Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Aug 10: Pakistan said today the United States must return 658 million US dollar if it cannot supply contracted F-16 fighters to Islamabad due to legal hurdles, reports Reuter.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said Pakistan would not accept "further discriminatory restraint" to obtain the jets and would make alternative arrangements for its air defence.

He was responding to a statement by a US State Department spokesman on Tuesday that Washington,

which cut off all military aid to Islamabad in 1990 over a nuclear row, had no plans to allow the delivery of the 38 paid-for F-16s soon.

"While this offer is still on the table and we continue to explore it with Pakistani authorities, as a practical matter we are unlikely to reach agreement in the immediate future," State Department spokesman David Johnson said in Washington.

"The government of Pakistan believes that if the United States is convinced

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Talks on Rohingya repatriation tomorrow

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 10: The 17th round of official talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees will be held here on Friday.

Official sources said the Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong, Md Shafiqul Islam, and the Director General of Myanmar's Immigration and Manpower Department U Maung Aung, would lead their

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WASA regrets inconvenience

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) yesterday deeply regretted the inconveniences caused to the people of Baddanagar Lane under Laibagh thana because of lack of drinking water during the last few days.

In a press release signed by the Public Relations Officer Syed Ahmed Kabiruddin, the WASA said that immediately on receipt of complaints from the local people and The Daily Star, WASA officials

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