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NEWS BRIEFS

Salam visits ailing minister

Secretary General of the BNP and LGED, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar yesterday visited his ailing colleague State Minister for Education Principal Eunus Khan at PG Hospital. He called upon the leaders, workers and well-wishers of the party to pray to Almighty Allah for the early recovery of Eunus Khan, reports BSS.

Urs of Hazrat Shah Paran

From Our Correspondent
SYLHET, Aug 11: The annual urs of Hazrat Shah Paran (RA) will begin tomorrow at the shrine of the saint in Sylhet. The three-day programmes include khatme Quran, placing of *gila*, special prayers and distribution of *alms*. Thousands of devotees began arriving at the shrine at Khadim Nagar.

BNP to start political training

The BNP will start political training successively. Names of 30 persons from all political districts' main party and its front organisations have to be sent to the principal of the BNP Training Centre A K A Firoz Nopri. They would be trained in phases at the central office of the BNP, reports BSS.

Fresh troops buildup near Sarajevo

Two UN planes shot: Airlift suspended

SARAJEVO, Aug 11: At least two UN planes came under small-arms fire today in Sarajevo, forcing officials to suspend a vital humanitarian airlift they had resumed two days ago, reports AP.

A UN spokesman, Maj Dacre Holloway, said bullet holes were discovered in at least two planes after they had returned safely to bases in Ancona, Italy, and the Croatian port of Split.

Peter Kessler of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees agency, said the planes were hit while they were on the ground at the Sarajevo airport. There was no word on who was suspected of firing the shots.

The airlift, a lifeline for

Sarajevo during most of the 28-month-old Bosnian war, was suspended more than three weeks ago after planes were hit by shots believed fired from Serb positions. The airlift restarted Tuesday.

"The situation in Sarajevo is extremely grave," Kessler said. "We have almost no food stocks in the city."

The shooting was another sign of tension mounting recently as Serbs have tried to tighten their siege of the city and Muslim-led government forces have gone on the offensive just to the north.

As many as 3,000 Bosnian government troops have moved into a combat zone just north of Sarajevo in the past two days, raising fears of

fiercer fighting UN peacekeepers said.

A peacekeeper spokesman, Maj Rob Annink, said Bosnian Serb forces also were being strengthened in the volatile area, but he had no estimates of the number of their reinforcements.

"It is worrying," Annink said. "Any increase in numbers can tip the balance."

He said UN monitors had seen government troops moving in buses and trucks through the town of Kiseljak, 25 kilometers northwest of Sarajevo, toward nearby front lines around the towns of Visoko and Breza.

The United Nations says some recent artillery duels in



The Rajuk Bhaban, not too long a famous Dhaka landmark known as the DIT Building with its clock tower, is getting a facelift with eaves and cornices being added to the facade. —Star photo

Rao to welcome Opposition MPs' resignation

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao has ruled out early elections over a dispute with the Opposition that has disrupted Parliament for nearly three weeks, a ruling Congress party spokesman said today.

Chandulal Chandrakar also quoted Rao as telling Congress deputies on Wednesday he would greet Opposition threats to quit Parliament over his handling of a probe into a 1.28 billion dollars financial scandal by holding by-elections to fill the vacancies.

"We have decided to go tough on this one," Chandrakar told Reuters after newspapers said Rao was considering snap

polls in response to the Opposition's continued boycott of Parliament.

"There is no question of elections before March 1996," Chandrakar said.

Delhi's Economic Times newspaper said today the threat of snap poll was concerning foreign governments.

Apparently, the queries are from those countries whose companies or financial institutions have made, or are planning to make, large investments in India," it said.

Western diplomats said they saw no prospect for early polls.

"There is no indication of any anxiety from anyone in this building," one diplomat

told Reuters.

The leader of the main Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Atal Behari Vajpayee, said some headline deputies of his party had proposed mass resignations from Parliament as the next step in their standoff with Rao.

The Opposition accuses Rao of shielding senior ministers criticised by a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) which investigated the 1992 scandal.

Brokers and bankers were accused of diverting funds illegally from government securities to invest in the booming Bombay Stock Exchange.

Rao's government re-

NICVD in need of urgent help

By Inam Ahmed

The National Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases (NICVD), the country's lone heart institute, is currently under strain due to shortage of doctors and essential supplies, Director of the Institute Prof Akhtaruzzaman has said.

He was talking to The Daily Star at his hospital chamber Wednesday.

"In the last one year, the hospital had no fresh supply of medicine, bed sheets, beds, plates and other essential items needed to run the day to day affairs of a hospital," Prof Akhtaruzzaman said. "The ambulances, whatever their number, are in a ramshackle condition. We need immediate supplies to save collapse of service at the hospital."

"Look at the situation as regards doctors and nurses," Prof Akhtaruzzaman, who took over as Director last month, said. "We cannot engage more

than 30 nurses in one shift in all the departments including the emergency wing and the CCU. This number is not adequate."

"Doctors are far less in number. I can hardly deploy seven doctors in a shift to take care of 175 beds," he said.

Although the number of beds is 175, there are always 50 to 60 extra patients, sources concerned said.

The shortage of essential items might be overcome in a month or so because tenders will be floated soon for procurement of those. But the number of doctors is unlikely to increase in the near future, the sources pointed out.

"We will soon procure some ambulances," said Prof Akhtaruzzaman. "Orders for these have already been placed. These vehicles are essential to remove patients to and from the CCU to the main wards."

The distance between the CCU and the general wards is about a quarter of a kilometre and patients are currently carried on stretchers along the bumpy road.

About the emergency unit, Prof Akhtaruzzaman said, "The unit will be provided with equipment to cope with heart failures. Monitors will be set up, defibrillator and resuscitation machine will be set up to tackle the emergency patients. Life saving drugs will also be made available at the emergency."

He, however, could not say when these are going to be done.

The Director also said about his plans to have new machinery for diagnosis and operations at the NICVD.

"Two new angiogram machines will be added to the existing one very soon," he

Programme at Tungipara begins

TUNGIPARA, Aug 11: Thousands of mourners started to pour into this remote village to pay their homage to the country's founding leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his 19th anniversary of death, reports UNB.

They came in buses and trucks — many on foot — from far-flung areas and converged on the shrine of the leader since early today.

The mourners placed wreaths and offered *fateha* praying for peace for the soul of the late leader who was killed in a bloody military coup on August 15, 1975.

They attended Quran kh-wani and milad mahfil at the mazar premises on the first day of a week-long programme to mourn his death.

Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina, the eldest daughter of the assassinated leader, also placed a wreath and offered *fateha* at the mazar.

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Talks on Rohingya repatriation begin today

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 11: A two-day high-level official talks between Myanmar and Bangladesh begin at the circuit house here tomorrow.

Official sources told BSS today that an eight-member Myanmar government delegation will be headed by Director General of Manpower and Immigration Department General U Mong Aung while Commissioner of Chittagong Division Saiful Islam will lead the Bangladesh side in this 17th round of talks.

Divisional Commissioner Saiful Islam and Commissioner of Refugees, Relief and Repatriation Khandaker Fazlur Rahman along with other officials received the Myanmar delegation when it arrived at Teknaf border point this morning for the talks, the sources said.

The talks, which is scheduled to begin at 8:30 am tomorrow, will cover various bilateral issues especially the expediting of the Rohingya repatriation, the sources said.

30 babies a day!

From Monayem Khan
COX'S BAZAR, Aug 11: Every day, some 25 to 30 newborn babies are adding to the number of Rohingya refugees at the 18 camps here, according to official sources.

The NGOs working there, however, claim that the birth rate is over 30 babies a day!

At this rate, in the last 30 months, as many as 17,015 babies were born in the camps, official sources said. Unofficially, the figure is put at over 20,000.

This number is almost one third the total number of Rohingyas repatriated so far — some 60,815 people.

During these 30 months, 6,048 babies died at the camps and yet another 3,000 women are reportedly expecting.

NGO sources said the widespread practice of polygamy and an apathy towards contraceptives among the generally conservative Rohingyas are the main reasons behind the baby boom.

Some 2.5 lakh Rohingyas, an ethnic Muslim minority, fled to Bangladesh, mostly in 1991, to avoid persecution by the Myanmar authorities.

RU VC panel polls today

From RU Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Aug 11: The Vice Chancellor panel election of the Rajshahi University will be held tomorrow (Friday) at the 15th senate session of the university. Three panels backed by three political parties are contesting the election.

The incumbent VC Prof M Anisur Rahman (Botany); Pro-VC Prof M Azhar Uddin (Economics) and Prof M Altaf Hussain (Zoology) are contesting from the BNP backed White panel. Prof M Yusuf Ali (Chemistry), Prof Umar Ali (Chemistry) and Prof A K M Azharul Islam (Physics) are vying from the Jamaat backed Green panel.

The contestants from the Awami League backed Yellow panel are Prof F R Khan (Sociology), Prof Abul Fazal Haq (Political Science) and Prof M Kayesuddin (Bio-Chemistry).

Some 94 out of 103 senators are expected to cast their votes in the election.

Pretoria exploring trade openings in Bangladesh

By M Anwarul Haq

Pretoria hopes to establish extensive trading and economic links with Dhaka that would benefit both countries.

This was stated by Johan H Zaayman, First Secretary in the South African High Commission in New Delhi, who is on a three-day visit to Dhaka.

Zaayman, a career diplomat spoke to The Daily Star yesterday about the business potential between the two countries and also about the political situation in his country following the formation of the 'National Unity Government' headed by Nelson Mandela.

The South African diplomat who left yesterday evening after an official visit, met high officials of the Foreign Ministry and leading members of the business and trade circles. He described his visit as a familiarisation trip, particularly to

acquaint himself with the local business conditions.

Zaayman said, there were prospects for exporting jute, jute goods, leather and garments products to South Africa. His country, he said, could among things, export iron and steel, coal, wool and rock phosphate.

He, however, stated that tariff rates for textile products were high in his country in order to protect the domestic industry.

The dapper, youngish-looking diplomat said he had useful discussions with the chamber leaders and his office in Delhi would put in efforts to link up the apex chamber bodies of the two countries.

He disclosed that Prof Rehman Sobhan, economist, has been invited as an official guest to exchange ideas and

views with the government officials and economists of his country. Sobhan would be visiting Pretoria at the end of September.

Zaayman hoped that Bangladesh would shortly set up a resident mission in Pretoria. A proposal has already been received by his government, he said.

Speaking about the current situation in South Africa after the installation of Nelson Mandela as President, Zaayman said, "We have made considerable strides towards national reconciliation and in integrating the majority blacks and minority whites in the mainstream of national development."

He stated that apartheid has been completely dismantled. "All the remnants of apartheid

Privatisation of sugar mills Efforts continue despite serious obstacles

By Sohail Manzur

Undaunted by the poor response from private entrepreneurs to the government's plans to disinvest the public sector sugar mills, the Privatisation Board is determined to proceed with its programme according to sources.

Although not a single tender was dropped by any entrepreneur for the purchase of the Panchagarh Sugar Mills — one of the units listed for privatisation — the Board has decided to put another mills on sale by opening tenders on August 14.

The mills being offered for sale is the Deshbandhu Sugar Mills of Narsingdi.

According to sources, tenders were floated for sale of the Panchagarh Sugar Mills three times with the latest deadline closing on July 30.

Besides, the government is facing serious resistance from the employees of the Shyampur Sugar Mills in Rangpur and the people of adjoining areas and has not yet been able to hand over the factory to its only bidder Haji Bashir, a sugar trader of the Moulavi-bazar area in the capital.

According to the sources Bashir has already been issued the letter of intent by the au-

thorities of the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC).

According to sources close to the Shyampur Sugar Mills, the mills and its adjacent areas have virtually been turned into a fortress of resistance with all the houses packed with sticks and other weapons. The residents of those houses have reportedly been instructed by the leaders of the workers to turn up with their weapons when the factory siren is sounded as soon as the new owner comes to take over possession.

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Malaysian woman sued by Customs

By Staff Correspondent

Malaysian woman Ong Siew Piw, detained overnight at the Zia Airport Tuesday for unauthorised possession of foreign currency, was sued by the Customs authorities yesterday.

A case was filed with the Cantonment Police by Customs Inspector S M Mohsin, charging the Malaysian entrepreneur under Section 16 and 32 of the Customs Act '70 and Section 8 (1) of the

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VC, students discuss DU situation today

By DU Correspondent

Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed will sit with the student leaders today to discuss the overall campus situation and find ways of restoring a congenial atmosphere.

According to sources the leaders of all the student bodies active on the campus have been invited to the meeting, scheduled for seven this evening.

The leaders of the two major feuding bodies — the pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Awami League-backed Chhatra League (M-L) — along with some leaders of the Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), are also likely to meet

at 11 am today to reach an agreement for restoring normalcy on the campus, sources said.

The week-long ban on processions and rallies on the DU campus, which was imposed after the terrorist activities of August 4, expires today.

Earlier on Monday, the leaders of the JCD and the BCL, at a meeting, agreed in principle to restore a proper academic climate on the campus which deteriorated following a gunbattle between these two major students' organisations on August 4.

But an adverse reaction was created among the JCD ac-

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Swedish Muslim group 'won't hurt' Taslima

STOCKHOLM, Sweden, Aug 11: Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen, who fled to Sweden, was assured Thursday that Muslim groups in Sweden did not want to hurt her, reports AP.

A Swedish Muslim leader said she was safe there from the death threats that hounded her at home. But he cautioned that the groups would not be able to protect her from the actions of individuals.

To punish those who blaspheme Islam is for God to do, not us," said Mahmoud Aldebe, Chairman of the Islamic

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Council in Sweden, according to the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter.

Aldebe said that message would be conveyed in mosques Friday, but he warned that some individuals in Sweden's Muslim community might not pay heed.

Taslima Nasreen should refrain from being provocative while she is here," Aldebe told the newspaper.

The Muslim community in Sweden numbers about 200,000, according to the Islamic Council. Almost all are immigrants, many from Bosnia, Iran and Turkey.

Nasreen left her country on Tuesday and arrived in Sweden the next day under heavy security and security. She went immediately to a hideout arranged by her sponsors. The Swedish branch of PEN, the international writers' organisation

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HSC exams of Aug 15, 21 rescheduled

The schedules of the current HSC examinations under the four Education Boards on August 15 and 21 have been changed, reports UNB.

The examinations scheduled to be held on August 15 in the morning and afternoon shifts will now be held on September four due to unavoidable circumstances.

The examinations scheduled to be held on August 21 will be held on September five due to Eid-e-Miladunnabi holiday on the day.

The timetable of other examinations will remain unchanged.

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