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NEWS BRIEFS

Public holiday Aug 21

The government has announced August 21 as public holiday on the occasion of holy Eid-e-MiladunNabi, an official press release said yesterday. Earlier, August 20 was announced public holiday in observance of the day as it was presumed that the moon of the "Rabiul Awal" month would be sighted on August 8, reports BSS.

AL public meet tomorrow

The Awami League will hold a public meeting tomorrow at the Bangabandhu Avenue marking the 19th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Party chief Sheikh Hasina will preside over the meeting, reports UNB.

Laparoscopic surgery in HFRC Hospital

The Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital has introduced laparoscopic surgery to remove gallbladder stone without opening the abdomen. Chairman of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Shahidul Huq Jamal MP, inaugurated on Sunday the new system, reports BSS.

Chunarughat Bridge opens today

The Chunarughat Bridge over the river Khoa in Habiganj district will be opened to traffic today. Communications Minister Oli Ahmed will inaugurate the bridge to connect four unions of Chunarughat with thana headquarters. The 480 feet long and 12 feet wide four-span Bailey bridge, on permanent concrete structure, has been constructed at a cost of about Tk 55 lakh, reports UNB.

Zhirinovsky heckled

KAZAN, Russia Aug 15: Ultra-nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who's been getting a mixed reaction as he travels across the country, was heckled while speaking to a crowd of several thousand people in the central Russian city of Kazan, reports AP.

Motorcycle rider killed in Faridpur

Faridpur Aug 15: A motorcycle rider was killed and another injured when a speeding truck hit them near the Amirabad bus stand on Faridpur-Daulatia highway today. Police said Akhteruzzaman Achibha, 42, died on way to hospital while Fazlu, 35, received minor injuries after the truck had knocked them down at about 5 pm. Witnesses said the accident took place when Fazlu, who was driving the bike suddenly turned near Amirabad bus stand, reports UNB.

MCCI study report

Labour disputes cost over 8m man days in 20 yrs

Star Report

The country's manufacturing sector lost a total of 8.36 million man days due to labour disputes between 1972-91 and a large percentage of the work stoppages were politically instigated.

According to a recent report based on a study conducted by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), out of a total of 932 labour disputes during the period 38.3 per cent were politically motivated.

The report on manufacturing labour productivity and trade unionism noted that the

country's labour productivity has consistently declined over the past 20 years and cautioned against the dangers of liberalising trade without the requisite policy package to improve local competitive efficiency.

Otherwise, the report pointed out, it would not be possible to bring about sustainable development needed to improve conditions of life and work and creation of new jobs.

The study report revealed that the percentage of strikes due to political factors increased from a low of 17.6 per

cent in the 1970s to a high of 100 per cent in the late 1980s and between 1972-91 357 out of a total of 932 labour disputes occurred at political instigation.

As a consequence, three million man days, out of a total of 8.36 million, were lost, resulting in a loss of output of 27.6 million US dollars out of a total of 77.4 million dollars.

Available data show that in Bangladesh productivity persistently declined during the past two decades. Tragically, the issue remains unad-

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JS summoned Aug 30

Star Report

President Abdur Rahman Biswas has summoned the Jatiya Sangsad on August 30.

The summoning of the 16th session of Parliament comes with the treasury bench and the Opposition nearer to an effective dialogue for resolving the present political impasse, caused following an Opposition boycott of the House.

The Opposition parties have been boycotting JS sessions since March to press home their demands, including constitutional provisions for holding general elections under a caretaker administration.

On the other hand, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has been steadfastly opposing the idea of a caretaker government.

The next session of the

PM attends Army Selection Board meeting

The annual meeting of the Army Selection Board began at the Army Headquarters yesterday, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia attended the opening session of the board meeting in the morning.

Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan and all Generals of the Bangladesh Army were present during the meeting.

Begum Zia in her opening remarks lauded the role of the members of the Bangladesh Army during different natural calamities and in ensuring people's welfare and maintaining global peace.

Earlier, on her arrival at the Army Headquarters the Prime Minister was received by the Chief of Army Staff and other senior military officials.



The Farmgate area in the city during yesterday's half-day hartal called by the Awami League.

— Star photo

Countrywide peaceful hartal

By Staff Correspondent

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

The 6 am to 12 noon hartal was part of the 'national mourning day' programmes of the AL to mark the 19th death anniversary of Sheikh Mujib.

On this day in 1975, Sheikh Mujib and some of his family

members were killed in a military putsch.

Ever since 1992, the Awami League observes a hartal on the day.

in the capital, the hartal passed off peacefully.

According to the Dhaka

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Swedish PM wrote to Khaleda for Taslima?

STOCKHOLM, Aug 15: A handwritten plea for help from author-in-hiding Taslima Nasreen to Sweden's Prime Minister was her ticket away from death threats in Bangladesh, a newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

"My situation is desperate. I ask you kindly to intervene for my survival," the Expressen newspaper quoted Nasreen's letter as saying.

The Bangladeshi author, who hurt Muslim sentiments by demanding that Islamic law be changed to include more rights for women, fled to Sweden last week and immediately went into hiding.

Officially she came at the invitation of the Swedish branch of the international writers' organisation, PEN.

But Expressen said her letter, written while in hiding in Bangladesh and addressed personally to Prime Minister Carl Bildt, triggered a spurt of government activity to enable her to come to Sweden, including contacts with the Bangladeshi government.

Expressen said her personal and confidential letter of July 29 appeared to have been carried by diplomatic mail. Bildt responded

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Star roundtable on jute today

By Staff Correspondent

The Daily Star Roundtable on "The Future of Jute: Problems & Prospects" will be held today at 3 pm at a local hotel.

The main participants will include Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah, political leaders, Members of Parliament, representatives of trade bodies, labour leaders and well-known experts in the jute sector.

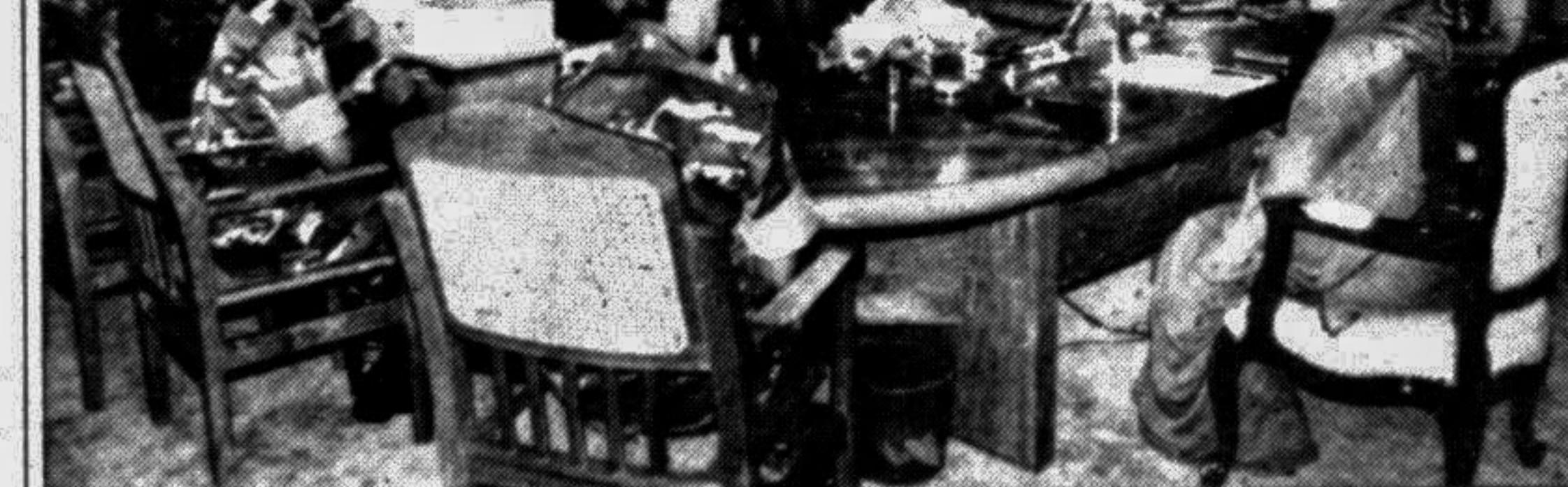
The Roundtable will be moderated by the editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam.

Nine killed in Comilla road accident

COMILLA, Aug 15: Nine people were killed and 15 injured when a bus plunged into a roadside ditch at Guma in Chandina thana of the district on Sunday, reports UNB.

Witnesses and police said the Muradnagar bound bus from Dhaka met with the accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at about 6:30 pm. The bodies were recovered on night.

Police seized the bus but the driver fled.



— PID photo



Awami League President and daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina and other party leaders placing wreaths before a portrait of the late leader at the Bangabandhu Museum in the city yesterday on the occasion of Mujib's 19th death anniversary.

— Star photo

11 killed in Kashmir violence

Militants shell National Day celebration venue

Lankans go to polls today

COLOMBO, Aug 15: After one of the bloodiest and dirtiest election campaigns in its history, Sri Lanka votes on Tuesday in a parliamentary poll which could end the ruling United National Party's (UNP)'s 17-year grip on power, reports Reuter.

At least 18 people, mostly opposition People's Alliance

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(PA) supporters have been killed in the campaign.

Police have received scores of complaints with reported incidents ranging from assault or harassment to the burning of homes, shops and vehicles.

Police expressed concern about possible further attacks after polling ends at 4 pm (1030 GMT) on Tuesday.

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Tk 5.1 cr to be spent for int'l trade fair

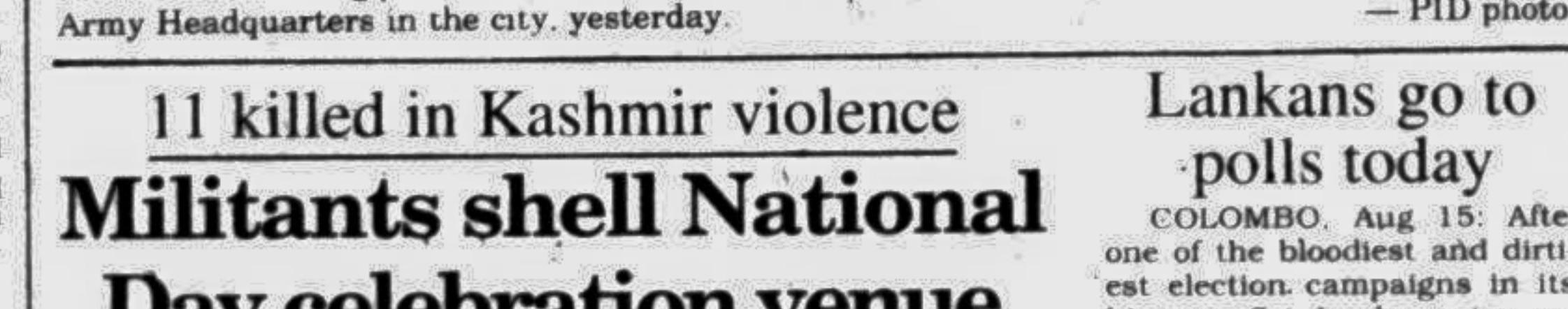
Star Report

The government will spend Taka five crore 10 lakh for the international trade fair to be held in Dhaka from January 7 to 21 next year, said Commerce Ministry sources.

Brisk preparations are underway to make the fair — the first of its kind in the country — a success. A 60-member organising committee, headed by commerce Minister Shamsul Islam, is now busy finalising detailed programme of the fair styled Dhaka International Trade Fair - 1995.

Besides local entrepreneurs, a large number of foreign firms are likely to participate in the fair.

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By M Anwarul Haq

In over 4000 schools spread over the 460 thanas across the country, a slow but silent programme is encouraging nearly a million boys and girls aged upto 10 to attend primary schools regularly.

A study funded by the World Bank described the ongoing process as 'Empowerment through Education.'

Actually, the programme is not only empowering but also encouraging the poor and poverty-stricken families to send their sons and daughters to primary schools in lieu of food and is receiving enthusiastic response.

The findings say, enrolment in the Food for Education (FFE) schools increased by

nearly 20 per cent on an average since the programme was launched in July last year. There has also been a higher rate of enrolment of girl students, compared with boys. The FFE schools also witnessed a nearly 10 per cent decline in the number of dropouts in 1994.

The study was conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute and Bangladesh Food Policy Project in collaboration with the Primary and Mass Education Division and the Ministry of Food. The World Bank funded the programme.

The programme, funded entirely by the government, is implemented in one selected union in each of the 460 thanas. It covers all government and registered non-government primary schools in a selected union.

If a household has only one primary school-age child (6 to 10 years) and if he or she attends school, then that family is entitled to receive a maximum of 30kg of free wheat ration per month for sending its children to a primary school.

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Report lauds Food for Education plan

By M Anwarul Haq

Students are currently enrolled in the FFE schools — some 4,787 primary schools of whom 698 thousand (47%) are FFE beneficiaries. Under the programme, about 9,500 metric tons of wheat are distributed per month (that is, 114 thousand metric tons per year). Each beneficiary family is entitled to receive a maximum of 30kg of free wheat ration per month for sending its children to a primary school.

If a household has only one primary school-age child (6 to 10 years) and if he or she attends school, then that family is entitled to receive 15 kg of wheat per month. However, to

We Regret the Temporary Inconvenience

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