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NEWS BRIEFS

Cultural Ministry
reviews projects

A review meeting of the Development and Coordination Committee of Cultural Affairs Ministry yesterday elaborately reviewed the progress of the ongoing development projects. State Minister Prof Jahan-Ara Begum chaired the meeting held at the conference room of the Ministry. Jahan-Ara gave directives to expedite the work for timely completion, reports UNB.

Gias Kamal
returns

Gias Kamal Chowdhury, chief reporter of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) and president of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, returned home last night from Singapore on completion of three-week treatment at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital there, reports BSS.

DU journalism dept
teachers' sit-in today

Teachers of the Journalism Department of Dhaka University will stage an hour long sit-in today to realise their demand for constituting a judicial committee to investigate the August 4 attack on their department. The teachers, wearing black badges, will stage the demonstration in front of 'Aparajito Bangla' on the campus at 11 am, reports UNB.

Contraband seized

RAJSHAHI, Aug 16: The BDR personnel of 20 rifle battalion seized Indian contrabands worth Taka over 90 lakh by conducting separate anti-smuggling drive in different places of the district yesterday. Two alleged smugglers were arrested in this connection, an official handout said today, reports BSS.

Minister promises national
dialogue for a jute policy

Star Report

Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah yesterday announced that he would soon initiate a political dialogue to evolve a national jute policy to salvage the country's ailing jute sector.

He made the bold announcement at The Daily Star-organised roundtable on the "Future of Jute: Problems and Prospects", where participants voiced their concern about the future of the golden fibre.

The minister was responding to a consensus among the participants on the crucial importance of the jute sector—

which involves nearly 2.5 crore people in the national economy—and the absence of political commitment to solve the problems of the sector.

Held at the Sonargaon Hotel, the roundtable was attended by members of Parliament, government officials, leaders of trade bodies, industrialists, academicians, donor agency representatives and trade union leaders. The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the lively discussion lasting over three hours.

They also agreed that the

present problems of the jute sector primarily resulted from bad political decisions and faulty policy guidelines of the past.

The minister also agreed, "Today's problems in the sector came from the bad political decisions of the past."

He then proposed to hold a political roundtable with the participation of all political parties and others involved in the jute sector to formulate a national jute policy. "I will soon hold a political roundtable on the jute sector" outside the

Jatiya Sangsad."

All participants at The Daily Star roundtable also envisioned a bright future for jute, despite its current predicaments. They pointed out that environmental concerns would help jute goods regain their market share while the prospect for diversified uses is also bright.

The private sector jute industrialists attributed the problems of the sector to faulty government policies and interventions, inadequate incentives, high interest rates on

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The Daily Star Roundtable on "The Future of Jute: Problems and Prospects" was held at the Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday. — Star photo

PM opens Fish Fortnight



Begum Zia releasing fish fry in Khulna yesterday. — PID photo

KHULNA, Aug 16: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today inaugurated the nationwide "Fish Fortnight", saying there was ample scope for application of appropriate technology and proper management to boost fish production in the country, reports BSS.

Begum Zia announced that her government would award persons and institutions every year for their contributions to the development of the fisheries sector and declared that the lease period of the khas land, given out to shrimp cultivators, would be extended from the present 10 years to 15 years.

Inaugurating a seminar on "Fish Fortnight '94 and shrimp culture development" here at the Zia Hall this afternoon, the Prime Minister said the fortnight aimed at involving people at the grassroots level and it was initiated this year from the Khulna, famed for fisheries resources.

She said there was a scope for our pisciculturists to play a

research-based, organised role for the development of the fisheries sector.

Referring to the country's poverty problem, Begum Zia said, "We all have to take initiatives to break the cycle of poverty."

Describing the shrimp culture as a great potential sector, she said shrimp culture could play a significant role in the country's socio-economic development.

Begum Zia listed the measures undertaken by her government in the past three years and a half to infuse dynamism in the country's fisheries sector and said the salutary effects of those measures had already been seen as the growth rate in the fisheries sector recorded a six per cent annual rise.

She said the export earnings from fisheries stood at Taka 921 crore during 1993-94 compared to Taka 523 crore in 1990-91 while export earnings from shrimp alone

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Doctors start
48-hr strike
today

By Staff Correspondent

Doctors belonging to the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) will begin a 48-hour strike from today (Wednesday) to protest the recent suspension of its 12 members and to press home their 21-point charter of demands.

The BMA will also stage a demonstration in front of the Health Directorate today.

Today's strike is part of a fortnight-long agitation programme now being carried out by the doctors since August 10.

During the strike, the BMA members will also refrain from private practice.

Special teams, however, will treat the emergency patients.

Taslima gets PEN
prize, may stay
in Sweden
indefinitely

STOCKHOLM, Aug 16: Taslima Nasreen, the Bangladeshi writer who took refuge in Sweden last week received an award on Monday for writers seeking solitude, the news agency TT reported, says AP.

The award indicates that Nasreen may intend to stay in Sweden indefinitely. The Kurt Tucholsky Prize traditionally is given to writers who seek peace and quiet.

"She wants to work and we are happy to have her as our guest," said Gabi Gleichmann, chairman of Sweden's branch of the international writers group PEN which awarded Nasreen the prize on Monday.

The prize is named for Kurt Tucholsky, a German author who fled to Sweden in 1933 to escape the Nazis. A socialist and pacifist, he wrote many newspaper articles predicting the horrors of Nazism.

Nasreen will receive the prize during a public ceremony on Thursday from Sweden's minister of culture Birgit Friggebo, TT reported.

Nasreen arrived in Sweden under heavy security on August 10 and was taken to a secret haven by PEN, her sponsors.

Among other things, TT reported, the writer has been studying the English translation of her novel "Shame".

Gleichmann said Nasreen dislikes the translation. "She will demand a new translation before the book is published again" Gleichmann was quoted as saying by TT.

Emergency, curfew follow
voting in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Aug 16: Sri Lankans voted in a national election Tuesday, and the government immediately imposed a state of emergency when the polls closed to avoid violence, reports AP, AFP.

In addition to the emergency, which allows police to arrest and detain anyone without charges, the government

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also declared a round-the-clock curfew nationwide until Thursday morning. Earlier, the government had announced the curfew until Friday morning.

The polling appeared to unfold peacefully, although many people living in parts of the north controlled by the rebel Tamil Tiger guerrillas were deprived of their vote because it was impossible to organise a ballot.

Election officials said they estimated that "over 75" per

cent of the 10.9 million electorate had turned out to vote to elect Sri Lanka's 10th parliament to a six-year term.

There were no immediate reports from the embattled north on how the election was conducted, but the dominant Tamil separatist group carried out an attack against a key navy port there shortly before voting began.

Rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) divers penetrated navy defences and blew up a decommissioned 4,000-tonne ship.

Political analysts believe the opposition People's Alliance (PA), a coalition of nine leftist parties, could mount a serious challenge and government stalwarts have admitted that this is their toughest election.

Wijetunga announced an indefinite curfew from midnight today when results were to begin to trickle in. Final results will be known by mid-Wednesday.

Hearing of writ
against Opposition
boycott resumes
today

Hearing of the writ in the High Court against the Opposition boycott of Parliament was deferred till today upon a petition filed by Jatiya Party leader Maudud Ahmed, reports UNB.

In his petition yesterday, Maudud submitted that rule should also be issued upon the Speaker and the Secretary of Parliament who were parties in the writ. For proper adjudication of the case their presence was needed, he added.

The High Court division bench comprising Justice Kazi Shafiquddin and Justice Kazi A T Manwar Uddin admitted Maudud's petition and set Wednesday for its hearing.

PML, ANP MPs
quit Pak
NA bodies

ISLAMABAD, Aug 16: Two Pakistani opposition parties trying to oust Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto have resigned from parliamentary committees, a party spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

Members of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and the Awami National Party (ANP) gave their resignations from house committees to National Assembly Speaker Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday night, PML Secretary General Sartaj Aziz said.

He said the action was in protest at what he called growing corruption, political appointments to the judiciary and government mishandling of the economy and foreign policy.

Sartaj said PML leader and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would soon rally anti-government sentiment during a planned railway journey from Karachi to Islamabad.

Govt to build 3000 flats
by June '96

The government yesterday decided to construct 3,000 flats in the capital city by June, 1996 to meet the acute accommodation crisis of the government officials in the city, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at a high-level, inter-ministerial meeting held at the conference room of the Ministry of Finance with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Public Works and Housing Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Minister of State for Planning Dr Abdul

Moyeen Khan attended the meeting. Of the 3,000 flats, 2000 will be constructed in the current financial year (1994-95) ending in June 1995.

The meeting also decided to construct 60 flats in Dhaka and in other district headquarters for the accommodation of judges and judicial officials by June next year.

Besides, the meeting also directed the concerned authorities to complete the projects for construction of thana bhavans, jail bhavans and police investigation centres.

Fresh clash in N'ganj
injures 50

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 16: A fresh clash between a mob and police left over 50 people injured, ten of them seriously, in Deobhog union here this evening.

The clash was a sequel to Monday's incidents in which one person was killed and 25 others were injured when two factions of the local Awami League (AL) clashed during a mourning day programme on the occasion of the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Following Monday's armed

violence, the two groups have separately given calls for hartals for six hours tomorrow (Wednesday) in Narayanganj town.

The clash ensued at 6:30 in the evening when police prevented a procession near the Diamond Cinema Hall from proceeding towards Bangabandhu Road where an AL faction led by the Nazma-Osman faction was holding a rally.

Witnesses said when police barricaded the path of the

Jesus was stoned
to death, not
crucified?

LONDON, Aug 16: Jesus was not crucified but was stoned to death for blasphemy, according to a controversial former lawmaker who has prepared a new translation of Matthew's Gospel, reports AP.

The conclusions in the new translation, to be published by Yale University Press in Britain next month, were reported Tuesday by The Independent newspaper.

The translator is Enoch Powell, 82, a Greek scholar and former member of British Parliament, who is best remembered for a 1968 speech in which he asserted that mass immigration to Britain would lead to "rivers of blood."

The Independent said Powell believes that Matthew is the first gospel to be written, and was revised several times.

"The most significant feature of Matthew is the coexistence in it of passages, one of which is an alternative to, or a duplicate of, the other," The Independent quoted Powell as writing.

It said Powell concluded that Matthew is preoccupied with demonstrating that Jesus was the "son of God."

"He is explicitly so born,"

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'Still alive, for
a long time
to come'

PARIS, Aug 16: Carlos the Jackal was betrayed, bound and drugged in a kidnap operation that ended two decades on the lam, his lawyer claimed today, a day after the world's most notorious terrorist was delivered to France, reports AP.

Attorney Mourad Oussedik said he will file suit if his client agrees.

But the greying gun-for-hire was unruffled on his day in court, jesting with the judge who charged him in a 1982 Paris bombing that killed a pregnant woman and injured 63.

Held in an isolation cell at La Sante prison, in southern Paris, Carlos has a 'good morale' and was 'very calm, very relaxed' at his hearing, Oussedik said.

Guarded by police carrying



This photo, distributed by the French Interior Ministry, reportedly shows "Carlos the Jackal," the world's best known terrorist, recently in Sudan. — AFP photo

Iraqi hunt for
killers of
Bangladeshi
peacekeeper

NICOSIA, Aug 16: The Iraqi government said Monday it had launched a swift hunt for gunmen who killed a Bangladeshi UN peacekeeper and wounded two others in a recent shooting incident in a demilitarised zone of the border with Kuwait, reports AP.

A Foreign Ministry statement carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency stressed Baghdad's "keenness on close cooperation with the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation in order to ensure security and stability in the region."

The statement, monitored in Cyprus, said Iraqi forces "took quick measures to chase and arrest those who committed the crime," but did not say if anyone had been apprehended or give details of the suspects.

IBM Branch Office has Moved to
Pacific Center

Please Contact us
at
Our New Address

Old Address

IBM World Trade Corporation
122-124 Motijheel C/A
Chamber Building, 5th Floor
Dhaka-1000
Tel: 241133, 232845, 242598, 231831
Fax: 880-2-863511

New Address

IBM World Trade Corporation
14 Mohakhali C/A
Pacific Center, 6th Floor
Dhaka-1212
Tel: 889783, 889784, 889785, 889786
Fax: 880-2-889788