

## Inside Today

## Article

**Black Sea  
Economic  
Cooperation:  
Windows of  
Opportunities**
By Arshad-uz Zaman  
Page 4

## International

**Rivals used Indian  
pilots in bid to kill me:  
Hekmatyar**
**44 killed in Moroccan  
plane crash  
Page 5**

## Business

**Country opens up  
credit line facilities to  
CIS**
**Vietnam facing acute  
problems for low  
economic growth  
Pages 6, 7**

## Environment

**Environment and  
Development Linkages;  
Red Marks on Green  
Plan; Sea Wolves  
Resist 'Disastrous'  
Anti-pollution Move;  
Stop this Urban  
Pollution, Please  
Page 8**

## Metropolitan

## Dhaka Day by Day


**Uncalled for Assistance  
Abounds  
Page 3**

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Gas in Kishoreganj

Kishoreganj will be getting gas supply from tomorrow under the project of Brahmaputra Gas Transmission and Distribution. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the supply, reports UNB.

## Cabinet meeting

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

## RMC hostels open

RAJSHAHI Aug 22: The residential hostels of the Rajshahi Medical College (RMC) will be opened for the examinees of professional MBBS examinations tomorrow morning. The decision was taken in the academic council meeting held today, reports BSS.

## 279 Rohingyas go

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 22: Another batch of 279 Rohingya refugees went back to their homes in Myanmar bringing the total number of repatriated persons to 62,631. Official sources told BSS here tonight that local UNHCR and Bangladesh officials engaged in repatriation process saw the refugees off.

## Three missing

 From Our Correspondent  
 COX'S BAZAR, Aug 22: Three people were reported missing after a passenger-loaded boat had capsized in the Maheshkhali channel here today. The capsizing occurred at about 12:30 pm today when the Sattapur-bound boat from Maheshkhali was caught in a storm. Other passengers swam ashore, according to the local district officials.

# Govt-Opposition talks likely soon

By Nurul Kabir and Asiuzzaman

The ruling party and the mainstream Opposition in Parliament are likely to discuss ways of resolving the present political deadlock across the table shortly.

The Opposition's demand for a caretaker administration to hold the next general elections and the ruling party's refusal to entertain such an idea has led to an impasse in the country's political arena with the opposition parties boycotting Parliament since March last.

With only a week left for the start of the 16th session of the country's fifth Parliament, scheduled for the 30th of this month, the ruling party is

learnt to be planning to propose a concrete agenda for a dialogue between the treasury and Opposition bench leaders. That agenda would include the ruling BNP's willingness to discuss both the caretaker government issue as well as the subject of strengthening the Election Commission, a source close to the Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Prof Chowdhury is a member of the three-man body authorised by the BNP Standing Committee to start negotiations with the boycotting Opposition. However, an influential

leader of the BNP said, on condition of anonymity, that his party wanted to resolve the crisis before September 3, ahead of a British parliamentary delegation's arrival on a visit.

Meanwhile, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim told The Daily Star last night that the Opposition was ready to have a dialogue with the ruling party, outside Parliament, provided the subjects of discussion included the issue of a caretaker government.

"We have been demanding a constitutional provision for an interim administration from the very beginning, and we

See Page 12 Col 4

## Parliament boycott

**Hearing of writ  
stayed till  
Aug 25**

The hearing of the writ petition against the Opposition's boycott of Parliament was stayed till August 25 by Justice A T M Afzal of the Appellate Division in his chamber yesterday, reports BSS.

The provisional application for leave to appeal against the judgement of the High Court division and the stay petition filed by Moudud Ahmed will come up for hearing before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on August 25.

See Page 12 Col 6

**Flood situation  
improving**

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Aug 22: The overall flood situation in Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi districts slightly improved with the fall of the water levels of the Mahananda and Padma rivers, officials here said today, reports UNB.

But the Padma at Shibganj and Mahananda in the town were still flowing 192 cm and 28 cm above their respective danger marks. The two rivers registered fall in their water levels by 11 cm and 5 cm respectively today.

Two children of Chapainawabganj poura area drowned in flood water in last two days

See Page 12 Col 6

**Jordan, PLO agree  
to set up 3 joint  
bodies**

AMMAN, Aug 21: Jordan and the PLO agreed here today to set up three committees to tackle joint problems and issues arising from the Middle East peace process, officials from both sides said, reports AFP.

A 'ministerial' delegation from the Palestinian self-rule authority headed by Information Ministry Yasser Abed Rabbo met with a Jordanian team led by Prime Minister Abdel Salam Majali.

The Palestinian team arrived today for a visit lasting several days. They were to dis-

See Page 12 Col 2

## Resist use of mosques as 'party offices': Hasina

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for maintaining the sanctity of mosques by resisting the use of mosques as 'party offices,' reports UNB.

"We want to preserve the sanctity of religion and mosques. Offer your prayer at mosques and resist those who are using mosques as their party offices," she told a meeting at the Awami League office in the afternoon on Sunday in observance of the Eid-e-Miladunnabi.

Sheikh Hasina also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament called for following the teachings and ideals of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) in building a society free from chaos, conflict and injustice.

Criticising those who are doing excesses in the name of religion, Hasina said this attitude was contrary to the teachings of the Prophet (SM). Quoting verses from the holy Quran, she said people belonging to different religious faiths had the right to perform their religious activities indepen-

dently. Hasina said Islam is the religion of peace, justice and brotherhood. But the deviation from the teachings of Islam and the Prophet often leads to conflicts in the world. She also criticised those who hurt religious sentiments of the people.

Expressing concern over the use of religion in politics, the Awami League chief alleged that anti-Islamic activities were encouraged in the country after the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975.

She recalled that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman established the Islamic Foundation, Madrasah Board, allocated land at Tangi for the Biswa Ijtema, constructed Kakrail Mosque and gave donations to many mosques and madrasahs during his rule.

Bangladesh became the member of OIC under the leadership of Bangabandhu, she said, adding it was the Bangabandhu government which banned liquor, gambling and houses. But the ban was with-

See Page 12 Col 3

## Milosevic rejects UN appeals

BELGRADE, Aug 22: President Slobodan Milosevic today rejected UN appeals to place observers on the Serbian-Bosnian border as a way to check up on Belgrade's pledge to punish the Bosnian Serbs for rejecting a peace plan, reports AFP.

Yasushi Akashi, the top UN envoy to the former Yugoslavia, said after meeting with Milosevic that the Serbian leader reiterated his stance that placing observers on the border would be hard for Serbians to swallow and smack of violating their national sovereignty.

Akashi refused to say what the United Nations next move would be.

Serbia announced on August 4 that it was closing its border on the Drina River, which separates Serbia and Bosnia, after Bosnian Serbs rejected for a third time the latest international peace plan for Bosnia.

Serbia had been a key source of support for the Bosnian Serbs.



Members of the public and law enforcing agencies seen yesterday retrieving bodies of the victims of Saturday's launch disaster in Chandpur. — Star photo

## Int'l workshop on Bangladesh in Netherlands from Aug 25

An International Workshop on Bangladesh will be held in Zeist of the Netherlands from August 25-27, reports UNB.

The workshop titled 'Facing the 21st Century: Social Mobilisation, Cultural Change and Sustainable Development in Bangladesh' is being organised by the European network of Bangladesh Studies (ENBS).

It will be participated by social scientists from Bangladesh and various European countries.

The workshop will discuss papers on family law and women, early Muslim women writers, culture and the child, mobilisation for khas land, foreign aid and the crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It will also dwell on infrastructural investment, ecological cost of shrimp culture, food production, urban transport, primary education, the media and the representation of 'developing countries' the resurgence of fundamentalism.

See Page 12 Col 8

## Twelve bodies of launch capsized victims found

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Aug 22: Twelve bodies were recovered in the last two days from the river Meghna, downstream of the site where a launch — MV Dinar-2 — capsized with an estimated 300 passengers.

Hundreds of relatives of the victims were still frantically searching for the bodies, believed to have been trapped inside the vessel.

Some 200 passengers were feared drowned when the

## PM orders probe into cause of launch capsizing

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Sunday instructed the Shipping Ministry to make an inquiry into the cause of Saturday's launch capsizing in which many a passenger drowned at the Meghna-Dakatia confluence near the Chandpur ghat, reports BSS.

Begum Zia enquired about the rescue operations and

See Page 12 Col 7

Dinar-2 sank at the confluence of the rivers Meghna and Dakatia at about 2:45 pm Saturday.

The launch sank in strong currents while taking a turn to berth at the local terminal.

A combined rescue operation of the Navy, IWTA, Fire Service and the local administration has failed to locate the

Editorial on page 4

sunken vessel as yet.

A team of 12 Navy frogmen today joined the IWTA and Fire Service divers scouting for eight hours to locate Dinar-2 somewhere in the 200-feet-deep river bed.

The search was put off at about 2:15 pm today because of severe current and whirlpool.

IWTA rescue vessel Amir Hamza arrived here at 9:00 am today from Narayanganj to start the salvage, only when the vessel is traced.

BNS Shah Jalal of the Navy, which is capable of carrying

See Page 12 Col 3

## Miladunnabi observed

Holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi was observed all over the country Sunday seeking divine blessings for the peace, progress and prosperity of Bangladesh as well as of the Muslim Ummah, reports UNB.

The observance of the birth and death anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (SM) was marked by milad mahfils, Quran Khwani, discussions and processions organised by various religious, social and cultural organisations.

A milad mahfil was held at the Bangabhaban after Asr prayers Sunday.

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, ministers, political leaders, judges of the Supreme Court, chiefs of the three services, senior officials, journalists and elite of the city attended it.

## DC DB to probe death of young man in custody

By Staff Correspondent

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the city Detective Branch (DB) has been assigned to probe the mysterious death of one Abdul Khaleque who died in police custody Saturday.

Thirty-year old Khaleque was declared dead by doctors at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Saturday while under the custody of Tejgaon police.

Tejgaon police had said Saturday that Khaleque, wanted in connection with a number of cases, died of excessive consumption of alcohol.

But the victim's relatives accused the police of beating Khaleque to death. They alleged that torture by the police had caused Khaleque's death.

Abdus Sahid, father of the

See Page 12 Col 3

## JU Syndicate for probe into death of Quamrul

By Staff Correspondent

The Jahangirnagar University Syndicate at an emergency meeting yesterday urged the government for a probe into the death of Quamrul Islam and demanded trial of the persons responsible for the incident.

Chaired by Vice-Chancellor Professor Amirul Islam Chowdhury, the syndicate also expressed its deep concern over the deteriorating campus situation and called for cooperation from all concerned to restore a congenial atmosphere on the campus.

Meanwhile, the Savar police had turned its General Diary (GD), lodged following the death of Quamrul Islam, into a murder-case, a police source told The Daily Star last night.



Indian police baton-charge a students' procession Sunday in Srinagar, the Kashmir capital as Muslims marked the birth and death anniversary of Prophet Mohammad (SM). Muslims in Indian-occupied Kashmir have been waging a bloody secessionist campaign since 1989. — AFP photo

## Ershad sent specifications of boats to ministry, court told

The Special Judge's court trying deposed president Hussain Muhammad Ershad in the Japanese Relief Boat Purchase Case was told yesterday that the supplier had provided specifications of the boats even before the quotation was actually invited for their procurement, reports BSS.

G K S M Shahjahan Amin, retired Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Relief and prosecution witness No-2 in this case, in his deposition said that

prior to inviting local quotations for purchase of the boats under a Japanese grant, ex-president Ershad had sent specifications of the boats to the ministry (Relief Ministry). Accused Ershad earlier had received the specifications of Yammar and Yamaha boats from the supplier, the Marubeni Corporation, the PW-2 said.

The witness said while the quotation was invited in late July 1989 Ershad had sent the specification of the boat to

the Relief Ministry in the previous month.

Shahjahan Amin identified two small notes from Ershad addressed to the Relief Secretary (written in June and July 1989) asking him to accept the boats as per specification. During deposition Amin said that the price of a 51-feet long boat, as quoted by the company Kinsho Mataichi, was almost half the price quoted by Marubeni Corporation. Incl-

See Page 12 Col 7

## JP never worked as stooge of any quarters: Mizan

The Jatiya Party is governed by the ideal of Bangladeshi nationalism. It has never worked as a stooge or a lackey of any quarters, reports UNB.

The acting Chairman of the Jatiya Party, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury made this observation yesterday in a sharp rebuttal of the rejoinder issued by the Jatiya Party (Nationalist) alleging that the JP (Mizan) was involved in activities tantamount to tailism to the Awami League.

He further stated that having failed to secure sympathy and kindness of the JP (Mizan), the so-called Jatiya Party (Nationalist) has started imputing baseless allegation against the former.

With a note of sarcasm in

See Page 12 Col 6

## Kazi Zafar's denial

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party presidium member Kazi Zafar Ahmed, MP, has denied that the party was divided over possible strategies to free Ershad.

In a press release yesterday, he said his attention had been drawn to a report saying the JP is divided on the question of party chief H M Ershad's release from jail on parole and that some negotiations are going on with the BNP government on this question.

He termed the report unfounded and said that there

See Page 12 Col 1

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