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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Daily Star Sport, as part of its extensive entertainment programme for the valued readers, will introduce new columns — Sports Talk, Did U Know? Sports Whizz Kid Quiz — for school children from tomorrow.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Hartal observed at Patuakhali

From Our Correspondent
 PATUKHALI, Aug 17: A half-day hartal was observed peacefully at Patuakhali town today at the call of the Awami League. AL gave the hartal call protesting the arrest of Sultan Ahmed Mridha, Chairman of the Patuakhali pourashava. Police nabbed Mridha following a clash between activists of the BNP and AL on Monday.

Goods train derails

JESSORE, Aug 17: A goods train was derailed this afternoon near Jessore Cantonment station, disrupting rail communications between Khulna and northern districts. Railway sources said five wagons of the Khulna-bound train coming from Ishwardi went off the track at about noon between Jessore town and the Cantonment station, reports UNB.

Gunshots at DU

By Staff Correspondent
 Few rounds of gunshots were heard on the Dhaka University campus last night. Nilkhet police outpost confirmed the firing and said that the police rushed to the spot near the administrative building at about 11:30 pm. But nobody was seen there.

Indonesian embassy hosts reception

Indonesian Embassy in Dhaka hosted a reception last night at a local hotel on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the country's independence. Minister for Health and Family Welfare Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, political leaders, members of diplomatic corps, journalists and senior officials attended the function, reports UNB.

Tension over Iraqi military activity US building up forces in Persian Gulf

WASHINGTON, Aug 17: The United States is building up its forces in and around the Persian Gulf because of unusual military activity by Iraq, primarily directed to the south toward Kuwait, defence officials said today, reports Reuter.

"We cannot afford to delay activity or action in response to what we perceived to be challenged by Iraq," one official told a briefing for reporters at the Pentagon.

The officials, who spoke on condition they not be named, said they were concerned but not alarmed by what they called a pattern of unusual training and other movements they said began about five weeks ago.

They said the "unusual" pattern was continuing and it involved elements from all of Iraq's armed forces — including air force, army, and elite Republican Guard units and other special units.

The United States is moving pre-positioned equipment closer to the Gulf and heightening readiness in case forces, primarily based in the United States, were needed to deploy quickly to counter any "escalation of the challenges" from Iraq, one senior official said.

Earlier Iraq said today threats by US Defence Secretary William Perry to use force against Baghdad were "empty, desperate and unjustified."

Perry said on Tuesday Washington would retaliate if Iraq attacked Jordan for sheltering senior Iraqis who defected last week. The defectors include two sons-in-law and daughters of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

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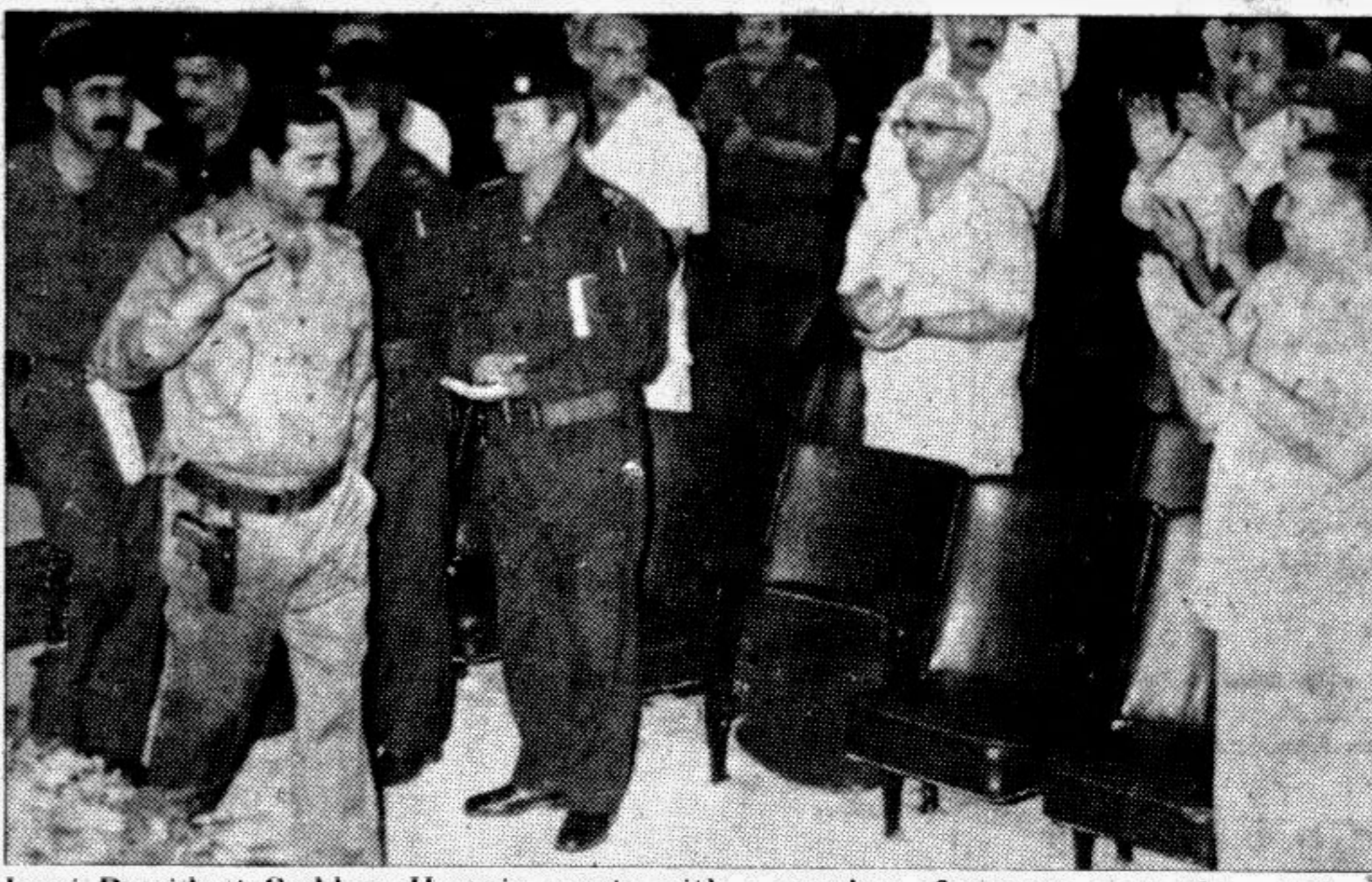
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Iraqi President Saddam Hussein meets with a number of experts yesterday at the military industrialisation commission where the Iraqi defector, Industry Minister Hussein Kamel Hassan, kept his files. — AFP/UNB photo

Hasina dismayed at Majibhandari's joining BNP

By Nazmul Ashraf
 Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has expressed utter disappointment over the defection to BNP by her party's former MP Alhaj Najbul Bashar Majibhandari and instructed her senior party colleagues to remain vigilant against recurrence of such events, sources close to her said yesterday.

Dismayed by the suddenness of the incident, Hasina also advised her close aides to inquire if there were any other leaders in the party who might follow Majibhandari, the sources said. She also said that such "turncoats" should be expelled before they desert the party.

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Fresh areas submerged in northern region

By Staff Correspondent
 Fresh areas in the northern region of the country were submerged by flood waters as the major rivers in the area continued to rise, breaching embankments at some places.

According to reports reaching the capital, fresh areas in Satkhira, Sirajganj, Madaripur, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna, Bogra, Rajbari and Gaibandha districts have been inundated by flood waters.

The flood forecasting centre of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) last night warned that the situation is likely to worsen in the affected districts, with the water levels of most major rivers rising further.

Torrential rains over the last few days and the onrush of waters from the upstream have primarily contributed to the deteriorating situation.

Tens of thousands of people have been marooned and standing crops worth millions of taka destroyed as the rivers continued to swell taking more areas under the grip of flood waters.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: The overall flood situation in the northern districts of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Pabna and Bogra further worsened, inundating more areas yesterday.

Water level in the Padma continued to rise and was flowing 5cm above the danger mark at Rajshahi, breaching the town protection embankment at one point. Fresh areas have been submerged in the Godagari, Paba, Chaghat, Bagha, Putia and Bagmara thanas of the district.

The flood warning centre forecast that the Ganges at the deteriorating situation.

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Dhaka, Beijing to expand all avenues in economic cooperation

Bangladesh and China have agreed to devise new ideas and models to bolster Dhaka-Beijing cooperation, particularly in the fields of trade, investment, joint venture and technology, reports UNB.

The agreement was reached in a two-day official meeting between the two countries that concluded at the state guest house Meghna yesterday.

The visiting Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tang Jiaxuan, who led his country's 10-member delegation to the meeting, described it as "extremely fruitful and a great success."

"It will be beneficial to the two friendly countries," he said.

Talking to newsmen at the end of the concluding session, the Chinese Vice Minister hoped that the outcome of the talks would help

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1 killed in armed attack on garments factory

By DMCH Correspondent
 An armed gang shot dead a worker and injured another in a garments factory at Khilgaon in the city yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Ganendra Nath Sarkar, 25, was fatally injured when the gang opened fire at Shajib Knitwear Ltd near Taltala super market, Khilgaon, at around 4:30 pm.

Sarkar, father of a child, died on way to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), hospital sources said.

Meanwhile, another employee of the factory Rafique, 28, received serious head injury by the flying glass when the gang opened fire indiscriminately at the factory building. He was admitted to the DMCH.

The cause of the attack could not be ascertained immediately. Factory sources, however, alleged that the attackers tried to collect toll from the factory.

The deceased Sarkar, an employee in the cutting-section of the garments factory, resided with his family at central Badda in the city.

Co-workers and local people who rushed the victim to the DMCH said that a group of about eight armed men tried to enter the factory premises located on the first three floors of the six-storied building Wednesday afternoon.

But their attempt was foiled when the guard at the entrance resisted by locking the main gate from inside.

In a renewed attack yesterday five armed men tried to enter the factory premises in the afternoon, and the guard resisted the thugs in a similar manner, according to witnesses.

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Delhi orders release of 24 Kashmiris

SRINAGAR, Aug 17: India ordered freedom Thursday for 24 jailed Kashmiri separatists, but denied the release was linked to the demands of militants holding four Western hostages, reports AP.

The Al-Faran militants have threatened to kill the American and three European hostages unless India frees 15 rebels they have listed. Last weekend, they executed and decapitated a fifth hostage, Norwegian Hans Christian Ostro.

India has refused to meet Al-Faran's demand, saying it would lead to more terrorism and kidnappings in Kashmir.

Kulbushan Jandial, a spokesman for Jammu-Kashmir state, told reporters Thursday that the 24 separatists were not on Al-Faran's list.

He said their release was recommended by a government

4 killed in septic tank

MEHERPUR, Aug 17: The under-construction septic tank of a latrine in the town turned into a death-trap for four youngmen, three of them of a single family, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the tragedy occurred at the house of Abdul Bari Shah this morning when the victims went down the tank one after another and got choked.

The dead are Mohammad Ali, 18, a construction worker, Mosharraf, 22, and Habibur, 19, sons of Abdul Bari Shah, and their cousin Anjal, 25.

Mohammed Ali went down the tank for construction work at about 6 am, but not to return. As there was a

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Meghna erosion threatens Barobazar fish market

By Naimul Haq back from Chandpur
 One of the biggest fish markets in the country — Barobazar at Chandpur — faces extinction as the mighty Meghna continues to erode its banks in the market area. During the last two weeks it devoured more than 500 square feet area along with 12 fish sheds worth about Tk 55 lakh.

The fish market, better known as Barobazar, is situated next to Chandpur railway station in Pura Bazar area of the town. Fish worth over Taka five crore is traded at the market everyday. Erosion this year, the worst in the last five years, has already destroyed more than

half of the market area badly affecting fish trade. If the spate of erosion continues, the rest may vanish by next year, it is feared.

There are more than 100 fish sheds at Barobazar where over 70 per cent of the trading takes place for hilsha fish alone, most of which are exported. This year trading has sharply fallen largely due to erosion, besides the authority's failure to arrange an alternative market place.

The Meghna continuously erodes its bank in the area, making it difficult for trawlers, carrying fish, to anchor at the river port. About 60 to 70 fishing trawlers

come to Chandpur everyday to unload the catch. Surprisingly, there is no poptoon to facilitate unloading. A poptoon was placed at the port side but it was taken away by the IWTA in 1990, following a leakage, for repair.

"Unfortunately, it was never returned," said Chairman of the Fish Traders Association, Haji Abdul Gafur. "We had repeatedly appealed to the IWTA to return the poptoon first in 1991, second time in 1993 and finally in mid-April this year, but we did not receive any response as yet. When contacted, the

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Hilsha fish being unloaded from a trawler at the Barobazar fish market at Chandpur. — Star photo

The crumbling myth of the breadwinner

By Staff Correspondent
 Only 21 women have ever been elected heads of the state or government, with 10 holding office in early 1995 — in Bangladesh, Dominica, Iceland, Ireland, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

According to the UNDP's Human Development Report-1995, released worldwide yesterday, the global average for women's representation in national parliaments or legislatures is about 10 per cent.

Women are still far from sharing equally in decision making, the report says, adding, for women in cabinet

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Child labour survey in garments sector soon

By Rashed Mahmud Titumir
 The tripartite survey, aimed at ascertaining the number of underaged garment workers and their rehabilitation needs, is likely to begin later this month.

The steering committee members for elimination of child labour from the garment factories have decided to complete all the preparation to conduct the survey by August 27. And hopefully, the survey would start from the day after," said an official of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), who attended the last meeting held amongst BGMEA, ILO and UNICEF.

As part of the memorandum of understanding

UNDP on Bangladesh situation

Female share only 5 pc of administrative jobs
 By Staff Correspondent
 Over the last three decades, Bangladesh has made notable progress in some areas of human development, but opportunities for women in the political and economic arena are still very poor, says the Human Development Report-1995 of the UNDP.

The report released yesterday across the world, notes that in administrative and managerial jobs in Bangladesh, the female share is only 5 per cent of the male share although the female share in professional and technical fields has increased more than three times compared to that in 1970.

"Human development, if not engendered, is endangered", the report says suggesting that there should be at least 30 per cent women representation at all administrative and decision making levels.

Bangladesh ranks 146th among 174 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the UNDP report, which indicates low human development.

But the country has made notable progress in life expectancy between 1960 and 1992 which increased to 56 years from 40. The adult literacy

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Prokrichi demands abolition of BCS (Admin) Cadre

The Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council yesterday demanded abolition of the BCS (Admin) cadre, splitting it into BCS (Land) and BCS (Magistracy) cadres to "remove administrative anarchy, indiscipline and discrimination," reports UNB.

The BCS (Admin) cadre should be divided into two cadres in consistency with the nature of job of its members and they should also be removed from all top posts, the Council's Chairman, Dr M A Majed, told a press conference in Dhaka.

The Council urged the government to meet its 17-point demand, including full implementation of the government order issued in January, 1994 for removal of discrimination in the pay structure.

More reserved seats for women in JS suggested

Speakers at a discussion yesterday suggested ensuring women's representation in elective offices at local and national levels for their further empowerment, reports UNB.

They also recommended increasing the number of quota in reserved seats of Parliament and creating environment for the direct election of women in every elective forum.

Centre for Analysis and Choice organised the discussion at its office, in which

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Rly to reduce train fare from Sept 1

CHITTAGONG, Aug 17: Railway authorities will reduce train fare of all classes to attract more passengers and increase earnings, reports BBS.

The decision will come into force from September one.

This was disclosed at a meeting of high official of the Railway at the Chittagong Circuit House here today with Communications Minister Oli Ahmed in the chair.

The meeting decided to evict illegal occupants from the railway property. It also decided to construct shopping complex to generate income at unutilised places of railway.

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'5000 families moved to Ctg city to escape terror'

CHITTAGONG, Aug 17: Frequent abductions, rampant toll collections and other terrorist activities reportedly forced around 5,000 panic stricken families to move to this port city from northern parts of the district.

Most of those families hailing from Raozan, Fatikchhari and Rangunia thana areas have now taken shelter in rented houses in different areas of the city to escape the wrath of organised armed abductors and illegal toll

collectors, according to sources in the areas.

Police officials said that it is difficult to nab those armed goons as their hideouts are located in the hilly and jungle-packed remote areas of the three thanas with bad communication.

"Moreover, local people hardly cooperate with us fearing revengeful attacks from terrorists and few complaints are received from victims," one police official added.

A local leader who is a lawyer by profession, seeking anonymity, said that some of the families once regarded as locally influential and affluent had left their homes following attacks by armed terrorists and toll collectors and started to live in the city.

"Even a former union parishad chairman of Debua under Raozan thana has been living in a rented house at Bakalia in the city for the past three years after being attacked twice by armed

goons backed by a political party," the lawyer said.

The UP chairman, Shamsul Alam Chowdhury, received bullet wounds when gunmen fired on him at Raozan, Fakirhat, close to Raozan thana, three years ago, the local leader said, adding that one Montu Talukder was gunned down in front of a tea stall near the thana about two years ago.

Montu was killed as he used to cooperate with police by giving information about

their hideouts and movements, the lawyer further said.

Moreover, the people who return from Middle East countries hardly dare to go back to their homes in Raozan, Rangunia and Fatikchhari and are compelled to stay in the city as they are forced to give heavy amounts of tolls or face attacks by armed goons," the local leader also said. "Not only that if anybody wants to construct a pucca house, he

has to pay tolls to the armed terrorists in those areas".

A businessman of Korbanigonj, Sunil Majumder, told this correspondent that he had shifted his family to Ghatfordbag in the city from Chikdair village under Raozan thana after his only son Bhabatosh was abducted. He was later released by the abductors after realising ransom of Taka two lakh, Sunil said.

One Nazir Ahmed, 70,

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