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**Inside Today**

- Article**
- Deadly Gambits**  
Column: Enchiridion by Waliur Rahman Page 4
- Focus**
- How can publishers contribute to publishing books for neo-literates; No more Rwandas; Reducing gender disparity through the media; and The political crisis: Seeking a formula** Page 5
- International**
- Baghdad ready to retaliate if Washington attacks**
- US vows to press on with fresh peace plan in Yugoslavia** Page 8
- Business**
- Strategies should be framed to develop open water fisheries, says Noman**
- Drought hits tea output in Sylhet** Pages 6, 7
- STOCK MARKET**
- DSE price index: 771.12 (+0.20%)
- Market capital Tk: 47.76 billion
- Transactions in volume: 101282
- Transactions in value Tk: 1510 million
- NEWS BRIEFS**
- 10 more abducted in Kashmir**  
SRINAGAR, Aug 20: Ten more people, including seven army recruits, were abducted by militants even as a breakthrough eluded authorities in the hostage crisis involving four Western tourists in Kashmir valley on the 49th day today. Five people, including a militant, were killed while security forces foiled militants' bid to blow up a government building and arrested 20 militants in parts of the valley since last evening, reports PTI.
- Discussion on Bangabandhu**  
By Staff Correspondent
- The Awami Tanti League has organised a discussion at the Town Hall near Mirpur Section No 10 intersection today at 4 pm on the occasion of 20th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will attend the meeting as the chief guest.
- PM shocked at deaths of US officials**  
Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed deep shock at the deaths of three US officials in Bosnia on August 19. In a message to US President Bill Clinton, Begum Zia also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members. Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman in a message also expressed shock at the deaths of 3 US officials, reports UNB.
- Passport forgery: 3 held in city**  
A squad of the special branch yesterday arrested three persons from Motijheel commercial area under the Special Powers Act on charge of sending people to Malaysia through forged passports, visas and false documents. Acting on a secret information the squad of the special branch arrested Ziauddin Ahmed, Fazlul Karim and Mohammad Ali Omar alias Humayun. Further investigation on the matter is underway, reports BSS.

## 275 killed in India's worst train disaster

FIROZABAD, India, Aug 20: At least 275 people were killed and 400 others injured today in one of India's worst train disasters when two Delhi-bound passenger trains collided, rescue workers said, report agencies.

News agencies said the accident occurred after the Kalindi Express hit a cow on the track at Firozabad, 200 km (125 miles) from the Indian capital. Its brakes damaged, the train came to a halt and was then rammed from behind by the Purshottam Express.

Troops were pressed into rescue work at the site, a Moghul artisan town known

for its glass bangles. "We have recovered around 275 bodies," said senior police officer Ajay Joshi, supervising rescue work at the accident site. "We expect some more fatalities, possibly 20 or 30."

About 350 people had been admitted to hospitals, some of them critically injured, Joshi said.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said it was the worst train accident since 1981 when 270 people died after a train plunged into the north-eastern state of Bihar.

It said 107 were killed in 1988 when the Island Ex-

press fell into the Ashtamudi Lake in the southern state of Kerala.

PTI said three cars of the Kalindi Express were completely destroyed and the engine and two carriages of the other train were thrown off the tracks in today's collision.

Most of the dead this time were male passengers who were sleeping when the trains collided. The fatalities included 18 athletes going to New Delhi from a championship in the eastern town of Tata Nagar.

"I was sound asleep when I heard a big bang," said M D Panda, a railway protection

force constable who was seriously injured in the head and back.

"I lost consciousness," the 42-year-old said, "when I woke up, I was in hospital."

People living near the tracks managed to bring out dozens of injured and dead from the carriages in darkness before official help arrived.

"It was a massive bang, and we initially thought it was a bomb," said a labourer who lives nearby.

The injured were rushed to local hospitals in jeeps, cars and buses. The dead, covered in clothes donated

## Most fruits, vegetables toxic, warn experts

By Morshed Ali Khan

Most of the green vegetables and fruits available in the market are contaminated due to indiscriminate use of chemical pesticide in their cultivation process, according to experts in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

"In some vegetables the deadly DDT is used upto 120 times during the cultivation process," said Dr A Latif of the DAE. "These foods may cause asthma, cancer, hypertension, liver cancer and even loss of memory" he added.

"USE of this banned DDT and other pesticides ensure growth of very 'healthy looking' fruits and vegetables but actually those become toxic," he said.

"Farmers in the border areas can easily buy any pesticide, banned or legal, at cheaper prices, and they use those in vegetables and fruits indiscriminately," said A Abbas, a pesticide expert of the DAE.

Abbas further added that imported fruits are also contaminated because most of the producing countries do not have a strict monitoring system on use of pesticide.

As a tip to the readers, the DAE experts said one should avoid fruits or vegetables which look absolutely spotless and "unnecessarily large" See Page 12 Col 8

## AL not interested in talks with BNP: Zillur

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman said yesterday that his party was not interested in any sort of dialogue with the ruling BNP which, he said, breaches trust.

"We are now determined to carry forward our agitation programmes to compel the ruling party to accept the popular demand for a non-party caretaker government to conduct the next general elections," he told The Daily Star when asked about the ruling party's move for a fresh dialogue.

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar had earlier told The Daily Star Saturday that his party was ready to sit for a dialogue See Page 12 Col 1



Flood-affected Rasoolpur area in Gaibandha district. — Star photo by K M Rezaul Hoque

## Floods engulf fresh areas

By Staff Correspondent

The flood situation turned critical in Manikganj yesterday while it further deteriorated in Madaripur, Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj districts.

In Gaibandha sadar, the situation improved slightly as flood waters started receding. But the flood situation remained unchanged in Gaibandganj and Sagata thanas.

At least 2.5 lakh people have been marooned in the worst affected Daulatpur, Shibatalya, Harirampur, Gheor, Satura, Shingair and Sadar thanas of Manikganj district.

The district headquarter's road links with Gheor, Daulatpur and Harirampur

thanas were snapped as on-rushing flood water washed away three bridges in Basudpur, Diabor and Shaly.

Our Correspondent from Manikganj informed that a ten-year old girl drowned at Bachamara village Saturday night. The Jamuna was flowing 74 cm above the danger level at Aricha.

The authorities yesterday closed all educational institutions in the district.

Our Madaripur Correspondent reported that parts of Madaripur town was inundated yesterday as flood situation deteriorated further amid downpour. Major rivers are in the district were

also swelling fast.

Our Correspondent from Rajshahi reports: The overall flood situation in Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj further worsened yesterday as more areas went under water. Major rivers including the Padma, the Mahananda, the Atrai, the Chota Jamuna and the Baranai have however started falling.

More areas in Kamargaon, Talanda and Sarangai unions under Tanore thana and five unions in Bagmara thana, have been flooded. The Baranai river is still flowing 37 cm above the danger level.

## Another teenaged girl rescued from Tanbazar

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 20: Police rescued another teenaged girl from the Tanbazar 'red light' area today.

Narayanganj police raided the brothel in the afternoon after the father of the girl, Minara Begum, 14, had informed the police that his daughter, missing for the last one month, was probably staying there.

Police also arrested a mistress of the 'red light' area Bakul, who allegedly bought Minara for Tk 2,000 and forced her into prostitution.

On July 25 last, police rescued a 14-year-old girl — Shadhina — who was missing for about five months. Following this, a group of woman-lawyers rescued six more teenaged girls on July 27.

Minara's father Golap Miah who hails from Musapur under Narsingdi district. See Page 12 Col 7

## OIC summit on Bosnia PM's initiative gets 'positive response'

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh is receiving "very encouraging and positive response" to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's initiative for holding an emergency OIC summit on Bosnia.

Disclosing this at a press briefing yesterday, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan said "A more concrete picture is expected to emerge in a day or two in this regard," he added.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has fully supported Bangladesh's initiative, he said, adding that the PLO representative has conveyed the Palestinian leader's support.

The President of Mali has also responded positively

while Malaysia is also very receptive and sympathetic about the idea, the foreign secretary added.

The Foreign Ministry of Morocco has also shown interest, although a response from the King is still being awaited, Sobhan said.

The Foreign Ministry is in constant touch with Bangladesh ambassadors in various OIC capitals, he said. "Our missions are keeping us posted about the developments in this regard."

Sobhan said Dhaka would not shy away from hosting an OIC summit. But hosting it is the prerogative of Morocco, which holds the current OIC chairmanship.

## HC asks govt to absorb 51 Mujibnagar govt employees

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed the government to absorb in the services of the Republic the 51 underaged employees of the Mujibnagar Government of 1971.

A Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice Habibur Rahman Khan and Justice Ruhul Amin gave the directive in a judgement on six writ petitions.

The court said the then Mujibnagar Government and the subsequent governments had recognised their contributions, dedication and services during the Liberation War. As such, the question of their absorption because a right from 1972 and onwards and this was not changed, the court added.

Aged between 8 and 16 See Page 12 Col 6

## Ctg AL leader held in city

Police here yesterday detained Alhaj Rafiqul Anwar, an Awami League leader from Chittagong, the city Special Branch sources said, reports UNB.

Rafiq was picked up under an old detention order from a house at Shantinagar earlier in the day, they said.

He was brought to city SB office after his arrest and later sent to Dhaka Central Jail with 120 days' detention.

The sources said that Rafiq, also known as "Sona Rafiq," was arrested on charge of gold smuggling. There was a detention order issued against him in 1993.

A top businessman of the See Page 12 Col 8

## Govt to off-load 49 pc Sadharan Bima share

Government has decided to off-load 49 per cent shares of Sadharan Bima Corporation in a major privatisation move, reports UNB.

The shares of Sadharan Bima Corporation, the state-owned general insurance company, will be offered to the general public after necessary formalities.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs took the decision yesterday at a meeting at the Secretariat cabinet room with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.

Sadharan Bima Corporation is a profitable concern of the government. According to available statistics, it earned a net profit of Tk 30 crore during the last fiscal year (1994-95).

Last week, the cabinet meeting approved a proposal for amendment to the Insurance Act 1938 and the Insurance Corporation Act 1973.

Yesterday's meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs also decided to convert the Bangladesh Insurance Academy into an autonomous institution.

Various proposals regard- See Page 12 Col 8

## Indo-Bangla talks on water transit begin

A two-day talks on renewal of protocol on inland water transit and trade between India and Bangladesh began in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

CN Ramdas, Secretary for Ministry of Surface Transport of India, is leading a seven-member Indian delegation while Shipping Secretary Waliul Islam heading the host side.

Under the existing protocol, India transports goods using river transit through Bangladesh mainly to its north-eastern states.

**JP office case**

**Argument against Ershad resumes**

The argument on behalf of the prosecution against deposed President H M Ershad and others in the Jatiya Party office case resumed yesterday after a gap of nearly three weeks, reports BSS.

It remained incomplete and will be taken up today.

Additional Sessions and District Judge (first court), Dhaka and Special Judge Zinat Ara presided over the court.

Public prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan, during the course of his argument lasting nearly two hours, presented various documentary evidences from the files of the Public Works Department, Ministry of Works and Ministry of Finance to prove the prosecution charge that Ershad and his co-accused committed offence in violation of established rules.

Former works minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and See Page 12 Col 1

## Malaysia to standardise foreign workers' wages

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 20: Bangladesh, the Philippines and Indonesia have agreed with Malaysia on a new arrangement to recruit workers for Malaysia, officials said Sunday, reports AP.

Discussions for implementing the system would also be held with Thailand and Pakistan soon, they said.

With the economy booming, foreign workers have been pouring into Malaysia, but citing exploitation and the need to streamline recruitment, the government on August 2 froze recruitment of foreign workers except as domestic help and shop assistants.

The new system, to standardise pay and protect

workers, will be implemented soon, officials said.

Unscrupulous agents charge as much as 5,000 ringgit (2,000 dollars) per worker as commission, when the price should only be around 1,000 ringgit (400 dollars).

Furthermore, many of the workers never get the work they were promised on arrival in Malaysia and are often paid less than the agreed amount.

Under the new system, the governments would agree to standardise compensation and other payments.

Now for example, Filipino maids are paid 500 ringgit (200 dollars) a month while See Page 12 Col 3

## Man killed for Tk 15 only

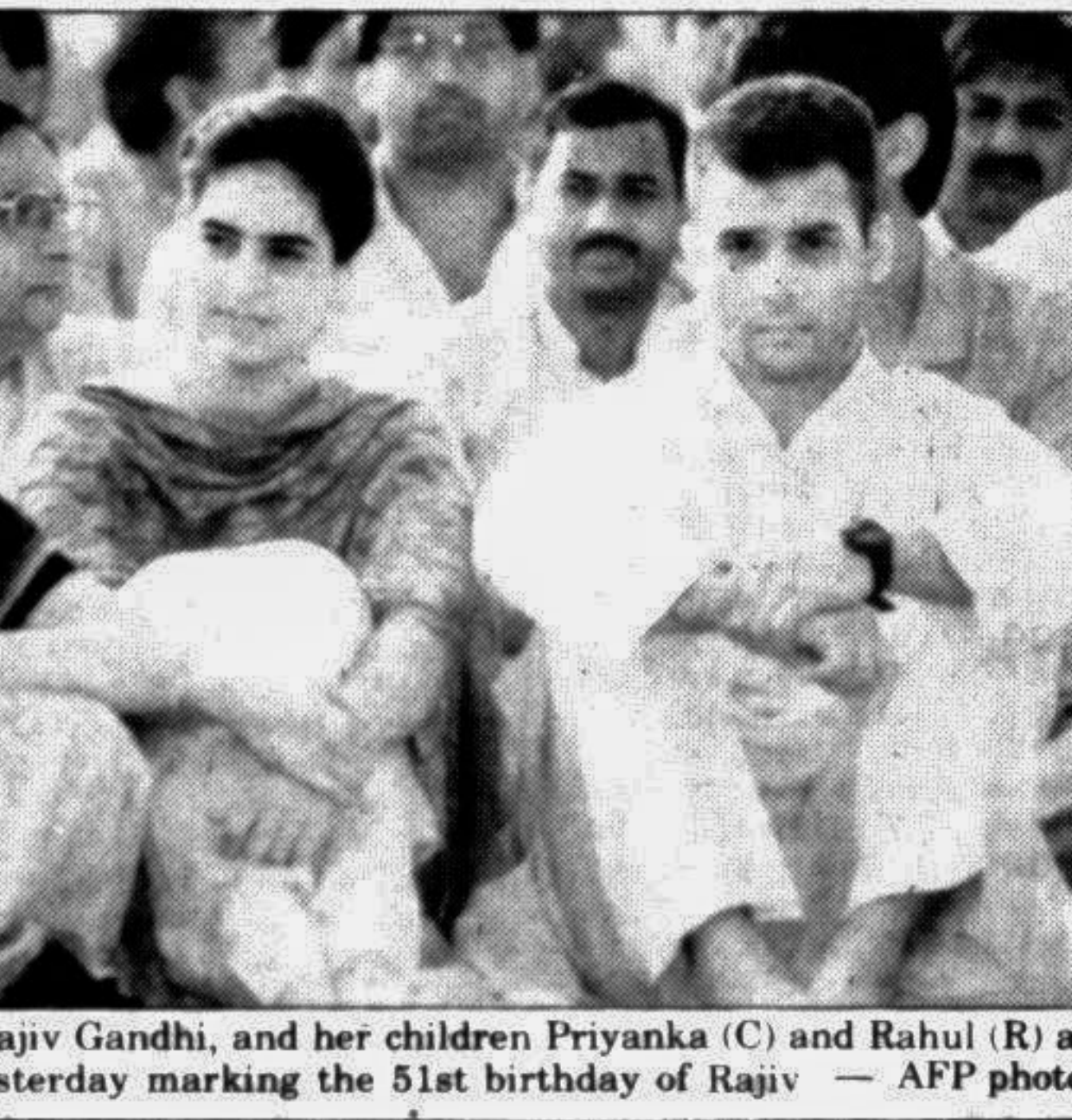
From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Aug 20: A clash over realising Tk 15 only claimed the life of an old man at Tarai Fazil village under Sadullapur thana yesterday.

Tamizuddin, 60 was severely assaulted as he tried to end a dispute between his son Abdul Latif and nephew Abdul Wahed.

Latif asked Wahed to pay Tk 15 as rent for a shallow tubewell. Wahed's refusal to pay led to a quarrel. Tamizuddin came to settle the matter. But he was attacked by the supporters of Wahed.

The body was sent to Gaibandha Hospital for autopsy. A case was filed with Sadullapur thana.



Sonia Gandhi (L), widow of Rajiv Gandhi, and her children Priyanka (C) and Rahul (R) at a ceremony in New Delhi yesterday marking the 51st birthday of Rajiv — AFP photo

## Nationalised banks' profit declines by over 90 pc

By Staff Correspondent

Bad loans and idle money have resulted in over 90 per cent decline in net profit of Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) since the introduction of Financial Sector Reform Programme (FSRP) by the government five years ago, a study said.

The study, conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), further said that before the introduction of the FSRP, the average annual profit of an NCB was Tk 25.62 crore, which has declined to Tk 2.26 crore now.

The negative average growth rate in the post-reform period over the pre-reform period was 91.18 per cent," said the study which compared the profitability situation of eight nationalised and private banks during the pre and post reform periods.

In contrast, the net profitability of private commercial banks (PCBs) declined by a much lower percentage, it pointed out.

In the pre-reform period, the average yearly net profit of a PCB was Tk 7.37 crore which, in the post-reform period, declined to Tk 6.65 crore, showing a negative growth rate of 9.65 per cent, the study said.

Findings of the study, conducted by a group of researchers of the BIBM, was disclosed at a seminar on "Impact of ancillary business on profitability of banks" yesterday at the BIBM seminar hall.

The banks' profitability declined due to huge amount See Page 12 Col 7

## Anti-smuggling drive On-the-spot trial at airports to be introduced

The government would introduce on-the-spot trial at the airports in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet to curb smuggling, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at the 11th meeting of the National Smuggling Resistance Committee held in the city with Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury in the chair.

The meeting also decided to constitute mobile courts to dispose of the smuggling cases. Besides, the organisa- See Page 12 Col 2

## Six killed, 20 hurt in road accidents

SAVAR, Aug 20: At least six people were killed and 20 injured when as many as 15 trucks crashed on the Dhaka-Aricha highway and Nabiganagar-Kaliakoir road today, reports UNB.

According to police, four Dhaka-bound trucks plunged into a roadside ditch near Fulbaria bus station on the Dhaka-Aricha highway early today as a culvert collapsed amidst heavy rains.

Three people died on the spot. Two of them were identified as helpers of a truck — Rafiq, 30, and Haran, 18. Identity of another could not be known.

Four other were apprehended trapped inside the trucks under water and drowned. The trucks could not be salvaged till filing the report.

Driver Azimuddin, 35, died on the spot when a truck over turned near DEPZ on Nabiganagar-Kaliakoir road at about 11:00 am.

An unidentified man was killed when another truck tumbled into a roadside ditch near Joypur on Dhaka-Aricha highway as the driver lost control at about 8:00 am.

Another unidentified man was also killed at 10:00 am See Page 12 Col 8

## Saddam's son behind defection?

LONDON, Aug 20: A son of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was behind the dramatic defection to Jordan earlier this month of the president's son-in-law, General Hussein Kamel Hassan, the Sunday Times reported here, says AFP.

Another Sunday paper, The Observer, said meanwhile Hassan had told US defence and intelligence officials that "Iraq was within three months of testing an atomic bomb when the US-led coalition launched the Gulf War (in January 1991) to free Kuwait."