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## JMBA to oversee construction of bridges, toll roads and fly-overs

By Staff Correspondent  
 The Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority will now look after construction of bridges upto 1500 metres in length and supervise construction of toll roads and fly-overs across the country.  
 This was decided at a weekly Cabinet meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.  
 However, implementation of the decision would require an amendment to the law concerned. Previously, the JMBA was authorised to construct bridges upto 500 metres. The JMBA was given the authority following completion of the Jamuna bridge.  
 The Cabinet also approved a proposal seeking solution to the millennium bug problem, to be posed with the advent of year 2000, in computers in government offices.  
 According to a minister attending the Cabinet meeting, some international financial institutions would provide financial assistance to solve the problem.  
 The Cabinet also approved Bangladesh's participation in the Bern Convention relating to the international copyright law.



WATER EVERYWHERE, YET ... Flood-victims in the city's Madartek area on way to collect drinking water. — Star photo

## Heavy rain: Flood situation may worsen again

The overall flood situation in 37 affected districts marked further improvement but it may deteriorate again in northern and north-western areas of the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins and upper parts of Meghna basin due to heavy rain, UNB quoting Flood Information Centre said.  
 The Ganges basin covers Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Pabna, Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna, Dhaka, Faridpur and Barisal while the Brahmaputra basin Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Tangail and Dhaka and Meghna basin covers Sylhet, Mymensingh, Comilla and Dhaka.  
 Flood Information Centre said the situation in the districts along both the Padma and Brahmaputra-Jamuna rivers are likely to improve, but in central parts of the country, around Dhaka city and from Bhairab to downstream, it may remain unchanged.  
 It said in the Brahmaputra basin, the Brahmaputra and Jamuna recorded further fall at all points except Chilmari where the Brahmaputra remained steady. The Jamuna is flowing above danger level at Aricha only.  
 In this basin, other rivers like the Old Brahmaputra, Lakhya, Turag and Kaliganga also recorded fall at all points.  
 The Buriganga at Dhaka, the Lakhya at Narayanganj, the Turag both at Mirpur and Tongi and the Kaliganga at Taraghat continue to flow above their respective danger levels.  
 The rivers in the Ganges basin marked fall at most places. The Padma recorded fall and was flowing above danger level at Pankha, Goalundo and Bhagyakul.  
 Monsoon is again active over the country. Significant rainfall was recorded at many places including 170.4 mm at Dinajpur, 131 mm at Chittagong, 105.5 mm at Rangpur.  
 See Page 12 Col 3

## 'US understands reasons for not signing SOFA'

US Assistant Secretary of State Karl F. Inderfurth has expressed his satisfaction at the steady growth of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the US, reports BSS.  
 He warmly hailed the recent decisions of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina facilitating the signing of accords on the Peace Corps and USTDA.  
 He made the remarks at a meeting with Bangladesh Ambassador to the US KM Shehabuddin in Washington, according to a message received here yesterday.  
 He also asked Ambassador Shehabuddin to convey his government's profound thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for awarding gas blocks and power plants contracts to several US companies.  
 See Page 12 Col 1

## US offers to mediate in Indo-Pak talks

WASHINGTON, Aug 3: The United States offered today to mediate in talks between India and Pakistan to head off a crisis between the two recently-declared nuclear powers, reports AFP.  
 White House spokesman P J Crowley expressed concern about the latest military clashes over the disputed region of Kashmir.  
 "The situation in Kashmir is one of those underlying issues that is central to the tensions that exist in South Asia," he said.  
 But he downplayed the level of US concern and expressed optimism.  
 "We are more encouraged that the two powers of the sub-continent are talking to each other," he said of the talks launched last week by Indian Premier Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.  
 The United States has offered to mediate in the Kashmir dispute in the past, and Crowley said US would do so again.  
 AP from Islamabad adds: Two US senators met with Pakistani officials today to learn about the causes of tension in the region.  
 Republicans Richard Shelby of Alabama and Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas will leave later this week for neighbouring India, a US Embassy spokesman said on condition of anonymity.  
 Shelby, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Hutchinson say their trip is merely a fact-finding mission. Last month, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott visited India and Pakistan to try to persuade the two to give up their nuclear weapons programme.  
 Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub told his American visitors today that Kashmir was at the heart of the Indo-Pakistani dispute.  
 Ayub said "the international community, particularly the US ... should help in promoting the resolution of the dispute, according to a Foreign Ministry statement."  
 Pakistan has repeatedly called for international mediation in its confrontation with its much bigger neighbour. India rejects outside mediation as interference.

## Protestors clash with police at Satkhira: 100 hurt

From Our Correspondent  
 SATKHIRA, Aug 3: At least 100 people were injured when police opened fire and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse demonstrators who tried to stage a planned sit-in on the premises of the Collectorate Building here today.  
 Critically injured Mujtaha Lutfulah, general secretary of Satkhira district Workers Party, was taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital. Some other injured persons including local JSD leader Quadrat-Khuda, were admitted to Satkhira Hospital and private clinics here.  
 Later in the afternoon, the demonstrators held a protest rally at the Sahid Razzak Park.  
 See Page 12 Col 6

## Petrobangla's PCD may become directorate

By Sharier Khan  
 Petrobangla is likely to go for a "large scale restructuring" of its Petroleum Concessions Division (PCD) soon for better monitoring of the activities of foreign oil and gas companies in the country, official sources said.  
 It is likely that the PCD will be converted into a directorate to make this division more "dynamic and self-sufficient."  
 A committee headed by the Energy Secretary was formed last week for this purpose. A joint chief of the Planning Commission is the convener of the committee, the sources said.  
 A detailed plan for restructuring the division is now being prepared and is expected to be placed before the Petrobangla Board soon. The Board held a couple of meetings on the issue in recent weeks. Experts in Petrobangla have long been seeking restructuring of the PCD.  
 Monitoring activity by the PCD has now "totally collapsed" due to lack of expert manpower and a drive by the authorities, the sources said.  
 The PCD had been directly involved in the unsolicited block negotiations with British company Cairn and US companies Occidental, UMC and Rexwood and had prepared the frame work of the production sharing contracts (PSCs) signed with these companies.  
 But this division gradually became weak over the last couple of years as expert-level officials left it. A number of PCD officials have either left their jobs to join foreign companies working in and outside Bangladesh or gone abroad on leave for higher studies.  
 The Petrobangla took an initiative and brought 27 BAPEX officials in the PCD on deputation few months ago to help it carry on its work.  
 However, as the new officials could not be given any training on operations of the PCD, the problems in monitoring are still there.  
 "PCD has become weaker because of the lack of focus of the authorities on the division. The division is virtually detached from the sources said."  
 See Page 12 Col 8

## Rice for relief in N'ganj misappropriated

From Our Correspondent  
 NARAYANGANJ, Aug 3: An inquiry committee has found gross irregularities in the distribution of government-sanctioned rice for the flood affected people in the district town.  
 The one-man committee headed by First Class Magistrate Nazmul Ahsan Majumdar, submitted its report to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) today.  
 The probe body found shortage in the packets of rice prepared for the flood-hit families while the register books showed the allocated amount of two kg for each family. The shortages ranged from half a kg to one kg.  
 See Page 12 Col 5

## 5 DB men placed on fresh remand

By Staff Correspondent  
 The five policemen of Detective Branch, arrested on charge of murdering Shamim Reza Rubel on July 23, were placed on a fresh two-day remand by the CMM's court yesterday.  
 The court also placed Havildar Abdul Quddus of Special Branch on five days' remand for interrogation. Quddus was arrested on Friday as he made an attempt to meet constable Parvez, one of the five remanded plainclothesmen of DB. All the six arrested persons are now in CID custody.  
 A petition was moved in the CMM's court yesterday praying for 'division' for AC Akram in Dhaka Central Jail and permission for meeting his relatives. Akram, an accused in the Rubel murder case, is under special security arrangements in the jail.  
 The court did not pass any order on this petition, court sources said.  
 Earlier, the five accused — SI Hayatul Islam Thakur, ASI Abdul Karim, Havildar Nuruzzaman and constables Parvez and Faruq — were remanded for eight days in two phases.  
 CID was undecided yesterday whether to seek a fresh remand for Inspector Amirul Islam whose four-day remand ended yesterday. He will be produced before the CMM's court today.  
 CID sources said they were cross checking the statements of the arrested DB policemen to find out the exact reason for arresting Rubel, a final year BBA student of Independent University.  
 "We are yet to get a clear idea about the reason for arresting the young man," said a senior police official. "We will have to find out certain things," he said but declined to elaborate.  
 Investigators were trying to find out the reasons behind Rubel's arrest. Officials however did not disclose the points.  
 See Page 12 Col 7

## Earn people's confidence, IGP asks policemen

By Staff Correspondent  
 The Inspector General of Police has ordered policemen to instantly respond to people's needs and to earn public confidence by their behaviour.  
 The IGP, Md Ismail Hossain, was addressing a meeting of more than 1,000 DMP personnel of all levels at Razarbagh Police auditorium yesterday morning, said a police press release.  
 The IGP mentioned that every member of DMP were working hard to maintain law and order in the city and ensure security of life and property the city dwellers.  
 On behalf of those present at the meeting, Additional Deputy Commissioner of DMP Sam-suddin Ahmed said that they would follow the IGP's instructions to improve the efficiency of DMP, the press release added.  
 The project will have major positive impact on agriculture supply of drinking water and the industries of the Khulna region.

## US urged to increase RMG quota by 30pc

By Govinda Shil  
 Bangladesh has proposed to the US to grant it a 30 per cent quota increase in readymade garments export to American market, according to official sources.  
 State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury said that a letter was sent to the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC asking it to convey the proposal to the US State Department.  
 He told The Daily Star yesterday that intense diplomatic efforts were being made to persuade the Clinton administration to okay Bangladesh's proposal. "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is also communicating with relevant officials," in the US for the quota increase.  
 "I am very much hopeful about the quota increase before Bill Clinton visits Bangladesh," the state minister said.  
 Abul Hasan also referred to a meeting between Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed and US Commerce Secretary William M Daley in Washington on June 4 and said, Tofael Ahmed was given a favourable impression about such a quota enhancement.  
 US is the largest market for Bangladesh textiles and apparels that earn for the country 1494 million dollars a year.  
 The government of Bangladesh believes that the US government would react favourably to its request which is made on the following grounds:  
 First, Bangladesh textile See Page 12 Col 1

## Mueed Chy made NBR chairman

By Staff Correspondent  
 The government yesterday made a number of important transfers and appointments in different ministries and divisions.  
 Secretary of Jamuna Bridge Division Abdul Mueed Chowdhury has been made Secretary of the Internal Resources Division and Chairman of the National Board of Revenue.  
 Additional Secretary of Finance Division Dr A K Abdul Mubin has been transferred to the Jamuna Multi-Purposed Bridge Authority as the Executive Director.  
 The Secretary in-charge of See Page 12 Col 5

## Tough Indian bill to clean up top-level corruption

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee introduced a tough anti-corruption bill today creating a watchdog agency with sweeping powers to clean up India's scandal-clogged politics, reports AP.  
 The bill to set up the office of the Lok Pal, which means Keeper of the People, provides for a chairperson and two members — all judges — with unprecedented authority to probe allegations of corruption against government officials, members of parliament and Cabinet members, including the prime minister.  
 Its role would be akin to the office of the Special Prosecutor in the United States.  
 Sources in India's Supreme Court said former Chief Justice Jagdish Sharan Verma, noted for his tough stand on corruption issues, was likely to be made the first Lok Pal.  
 The three members would be appointed by India's president — a largely ceremonial position — on the recommendation of a panel of government and Parliament leaders. They can be removed by the president only for proven misconduct after an independent inquiry by the chief justice.  
 Several top political leaders, including former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, are currently under indictment on corruption charges. Other powerful figures are implicated in some of the biggest corruption scandals in the country's history.  
 The Lok Pal bill, promised by successive governments for decades, was introduced several times in different forms but was always shelved. The latest version was approved by Vajpayee's Cabinet last month.  
 The original bill was drafted in 1977 and revived in 1985 by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but it did not give enough teeth to the Lok Pal and was later withdrawn.  
 Four years later, Gandhi lost power after unsubstantiated allegations of bribe-taking in a 1.2 billion dollar arms deal. His successor, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, introduced a tougher bill, but his government collapsed before it could be enacted.  
 Rao, who took office in 1991, ignored the bill for his five-year tenure. His successor HD Deve Gowda reintroduced it in 1996 but it was lost in the labyrinth of parliamentary panels. Vajpayee promised the legislation as part of his anti-corruption election platform.  
 Rao's attorney, RK Anand, gave a new dimension to India's anti-corruption law when he successfully argued that lawmakers were not answerable to the courts any conduct inside the house, even if they had taken bribes to vote for a motion. The new bill will overturn that precedent, legal experts said.

## Prokrichi places 17-pt proposal for 'removing disparity'

By Staff Correspondent  
 Leaders of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Coordination Council in a meeting with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Establishment Ministry yesterday, put forward a six-point charter of demands and sought its immediate implementation, said a press release.  
 Explaining their grievances, the Coordination Council also placed a 17-point recommendation for removing disparity in salary among officials of different cadre services and reforming the administrative system and service structure.  
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 See Page 12 Col 2

## Intern doctors demand pay scale

By DMCH Correspondent  
 Some 1,200 intern doctors of the eight government medical colleges in the country have demanded introduction of a pay scale for them and doubling their remuneration immediately.  
 The Intern Doctors' Association has submitted a memorandum containing their demands to the Health Minister.  
 The Association demanded increase of the intern doctors' remuneration to Tk 8000 from Tk 4000, a pay scale for them and guidelines for employment of newly-passed doctors in private clinics.  
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**Inside Today**

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FELICITATIONS TO THE HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH, SHEIKH HASINA, FOR HER PROPOSAL ON "SAARC DISABILITY FUND(SDF)" AND INCLUSION OF THAT PROPOSAL IN THE "COLOMBO DECLARATION" AT THE 10TH SAARC SUMMIT.

On behalf of the 12 million people with disabilities of Bangladesh, their families, well wishers and organizations working with the disabled, we express our heartfelt thanks, felicitations and deep gratitude to the Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, **Sheikh Hasina**, for her formal proposal for the establishment of "SAARC Disability Fund (SDF)" and finally inclusion of that proposal in the "Colombo Declaration" at the 10th SAARC Summit. She is the first head of the Government, in SAARC region, who has taken an epoch making step for the development of the life style of 100 million People with Disabilities of SAARC countries.

Hon'ble Prime Minister, you attached importance for enactment of laws for the establishment of rights of the disabled, Trust Fund for the disabled and SAARC Disability Fund (SDF) in the inaugural session of the International Disabled Day and 2nd South Asian conference of CBR Network, arranged by the Ministry of Social Welfare and NFOWD on 3rd December 1997. You have shown keen interest for implementation of the above mentioned programmes for the disabled people, during your meeting with the representatives of NFOWD on 9th July, 1998. NFOWD is proud and feels happy for being associated with the drafting of the concept paper for establishment of "SAARC Disability Fund (SDF)" at the request of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

On this joyous occasion, once again our deep gratitude and special thanks to Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, **Sheikh Hasina**, for her initiatives, and thanks to the Hon'ble State Minister for Social Welfare, **Dr. Mozammel Hossain**, and the officials of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Department of Social Services, for providing all out support.

**National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD).**  
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