

## Ice starts melting

Bhuiyan rings up Jalil as both get 'green signal' from Khaleda, Hasina for dialogue: Jalil to reply today



Mannan Bhuiyan



Abdul Jalil

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The much-awaited dialogue between the ruling BNP and opposition Awami League (AL) over electoral reforms now appears only a matter of time as the BNP secretary general yesterday gave his counterpart a formal proposal for talks over phone.

In reply to Mannan Bhuiyan, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said he will first communicate the message to his party chief and leaders of the 14-party combine and then after consulting them he will announce his decision sometime today.

Bhuiyan, also LGRD and coop-

eratives minister, made the call to Jalil at about 10:30am yesterday and formally invited him for a secretaries-general level dialogue to break the ongoing deadlock in the interest of a free and fair election in the country.

Sources said both the leaders have got green light from their party chiefs in this regard and the latest developments suggest that the dialogue can take place any time in the next couple of days to mark the end of a dispute over reforms in the caretaker government and electoral systems.

In the event of talks, the AL is ready to compromise on much of

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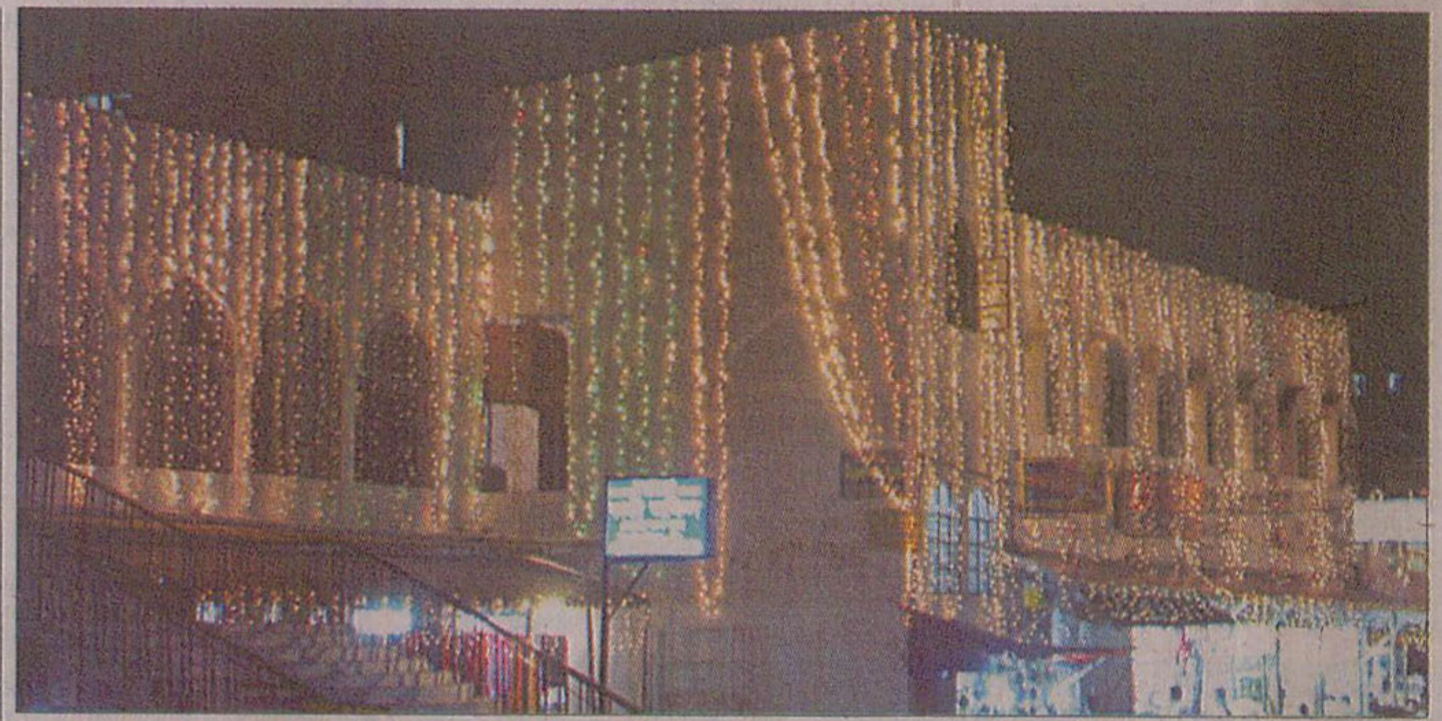


PHOTO: STAR

Defying a government ban, many shopping centres in the capital indulge in lavish illumination while load-shedding make city-dwellers suffer immensely. The photo was taken at Shahid Park Masjid Market at Mohammadpur yesterday.

## Jamaat sees no success if only AL, BNP hold reform talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner of the BNP-led ruling coalition alliance, has shown negative attitude towards the initiative of secretaries-general talks between the BNP and main opposition Awami League on the latter's proposal for reforms in the caretaker government system and Election Commission.

Talks on reform proposal would not be effective and successful if only BNP and Awami League take part, Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid, secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, told a private TV channel yesterday.

There should be discussion among all the political parties who represent in parliament, Mujahid added.

## APPEAL AGAINST DEATH PENALTY

### Rahman, Bangla Bhai file 'conditional' applications

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Militant kingpins Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai yesterday filed 'conditional' applications seeking permission to appeal against their death penalty in the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday.

"They have told me that they have given their statements in the applications and said it is up to the Supreme Court whether it will consider these as appeals or not," Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqy told The Daily Star last night.

Another source said both Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai told the jail authorities that they wanted to give their depositions before the

SC. If their pleas are granted, their applications could be granted as appeals, the source added.

Shamsul Haider said they would forward the applications--one containing seven pages and the other five pages--to the SC today.

Inspector General (Prisons) Brigadier Gen Zakir Hasan said Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai yesterday wrote their statements in prescribed forms supplied by the jail authorities and signed those.

Shamsul said Abdur Rahman wrote his statement in seven pages and Bangla Bhai in five pages and signed those prior to Iftr.

Asked about contents of the statements, he said he did not go through those properly. He however said the initial few pages that he went through mentioned about

Islamic laws and rules of Allah.

Bangla Bhai's elder brother Rafiqul Islam on Thursday submitted necessary papers to the sub-jail authorities in Mirpur for filing the application for leave to appeal.

Asked about this, Shamsul said they are yet to get any such papers. He replied in the negative when asked whether any of Rahman's relatives submitted necessary papers to the sub-jail authorities in Mirpur for filing the application for leave to appeal.

According to Jail Code, relatives of the condemned accused could meet them once a month but the rule was not followed as regards the seven condemned JMB leaders.

Asked about it, the DIG (prisons) said they would allow the

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## More attacks on power offices

Cases against 22,000 protesters in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demonstrations by the people demanding uninterrupted power supply continued yesterday in different regions of the country while police filed cases against about 22,100 unidentified persons in the capital for taking part in the violent protests of Wednesday and Thursday.

Several hundred residents of Azampur in Uttara of the capital attacked the local office of Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO) yesterday afternoon demanding uninterrupted power supply. The mob also vandalised vehicles

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## Power minister removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder yesterday said he would step down from his position today.

"Taking all the responsibility for the failures in the sector, I will resign tomorrow," Talukder told The Daily Star last night.

Satellite TV Channel I last night reported that the state minister made a phone call to his office and said he would resign today.

Meanwhile, in a late night development, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), after watching the Channel I news, decided to relieve State Minister for Power Major Gen (ret) Anwarul Kabir Talukder of his duties, PMO sources told BSS last night.

However, the private secretary

to Talukder told The Daily Star last night, "Sir [Talukder] has decided to submit his resignation letter to the prime minister tomorrow [today]."

Amid widespread public protest against severe power crisis, the government replaced state minister for power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood on May 21 with erstwhile state minister for finance and planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder.

Sources said Talukder and Power Division Secretary ANH Akhter Hossain had been at loggerheads over implementation of different power projects.

The aggrieved minister told a daily newspaper on Thursday that he was helpless. "Nobody is helping me to resolve the power crisis. I could not implement any decisions. The concerned secretary is

not working properly," the newspaper quoted him.

On last Thursday, he visited the Load Dispatch Centre (LDC) and said the government officials of the power ministry were not working properly.

"I am not satisfied with the way the power crisis has been addressed. I personally believe it should be addressed in a more pragmatic and practical way," he said. "But I am not blaming any individual for that, it's the total system that has failed to deliver according to the expectation of the people," he said last week.

His predecessor Iqbal Hassan Mahmood, when on charge of the ministry, said he could not work properly due to intervention by a high profile circle of the PMO.

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## RMG workers' ultimatum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different workers organisations in readymade garment (RMG) sector yesterday gave a 72-hour ultimatum to the government and the factory owners for fixing wages of the workers.

"They warned of a tougher movement if their demands are not met within 72 hours and said the recently passed labour laws would create anarchy in the country.

"The government and the owners did not implement the tripartite accord regarding minimum wage and other issues of the RMG workers. This might cause deterioration in the overall situation for which the government and the owners will be fully responsible," President of Bangladesh National Garments Workers Employees League Sirajul Islam Rony said at a rally at Muktangan in the capital yesterday.

Criticising the owners for not implementing the agreement timely, leaders of Bangladesh Garments Workers Unity Council

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PHOTO: STAR

Garment workers demonstrate at Muktangan in the capital yesterday to realise their demands.

## Hosaf rejoinder and our reply

The Hosaf Group in a statement on The Daily Star news on Barapukuria Coal Mine published September 25 said neither Hosaf nor the CMC manipulated any government or agencies to get the coalmine project under Chinese supplier's credit.

It said when the World Bank and Asian Development Bank turned down financing of the Barapukuria mining project, "Hosaf requested CMC and its consortium to finance this project". Accordingly, CMC and its consortium applied to the Chinese government to assure and support this project under "soft loan" supplier's credit. The CMC-led consortium submitted its mining proposal to the Bangladesh government and it underwent the supplier credit purchase guideline in 1993-94. "So there is no question of influence by any BNP lawmaker," the Hosaf statement said.

"CMC gave their financial proposal with 90 per cent supplier's credit, offered by the Chinese

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## FDI in power sector falls but shoots up in telecom sector

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the power sector has declined by 30 percent a year on average in the last four years as the government failed to press through new power schemes for lack of decisions and leadership.

However, FDI in the telecom sector, which repatriates several hundred million dollars each year, posted a 148 percent average yearly growth in the last two years. In the same period, foreign capital in service sector also has increased by 73 percent, on average, a year.

In terms of money, the total FDI flow in the first two years showed no signs of increase. But in the last two years, it grew dramatically thanks to investment in telecoms and services sectors.

FDI in the manufacturing sector, which among the other types of

FDIs adds the most value directly to local economy, marked some increase only in the last one year.

Bangladesh Bank at a board meeting Wednesday reviewed the present state of FDI flows in the country. BB sources said they have discussed the whole situation against the backdrop of a recent debate over the FDI inflow.

FDI inflow in 2005 rose by a significant 84 percent, amounting to \$845 million while it totalled \$460 million in 2004, 31 percent more than that of the previous year.

In 2003, the country's FDI inflow grew by 6.70 percent and stood at \$350 million while in the preceding year, it declined by 7 percent and totalled \$328 million.

Foreign investment in the power sector has been experiencing a continuous dip over the last four years. It stood at \$119 million in 2001, but plummeted to \$54

million the following year. Foreign investment in this sector was \$30 million in 2003, \$31 million in 2004 and only \$27 million in 2005.

The government could not push ahead with any new power project other than 80 MW Tongi and 250 MW Barapukuria plants in the last five years. Since its commissioning the Tongi plant tripped nearly 90 times while Barapukuria is not functioning properly. Incompetent Chinese companies set up both the plants.

On the other hand, foreign investors lost their interests in the power sector also for frequent cancellations of tenders.

## Kumari Puja today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hindu devotees will observe Kumari Puja, worshipping the virgin form of devi (goddess) Durga, at different puja mandaps across the country today.

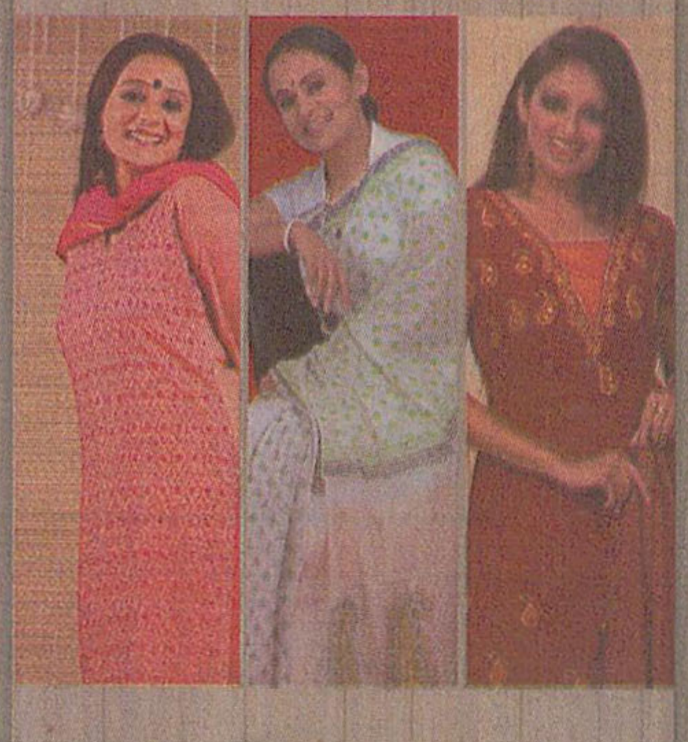
A girl aged between six and 12, symbolising the kumari (virgin) form of Durga, is worshipped on Mahastami in front of the idol of the goddess as a living replica of her.

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