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NEWS BRIEFS

PM visits ailing

Azizur Rahman MP
 RAJSHAHI, Nov 18: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today visited the ailing BNP MP Azizur Rahman at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. She also enquired about his condition and asked the attending physicians to provide adequate treatment for his early recovery, reports BSS.

100 BRTC employees join Sramik League

More than 100 employees of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation met with leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at 29 Minto Road and joined Jatiya Sramik League, her party's labour wing, reports UNB.

The newcomers were led by president Idris Ali Sinha and general secretary Mostafa Kamal Kama of the BRTC Sramik Parishad Jote.

Arrest order against Mujib Nagar editor

MEHERPUR, Nov 18: A district court today issued warrant of arrest against Editor and Executive Editor of weekly Mujib Nagar upon a defamation suit filed by Ruhul Quddus Titu, president of the local press club. Police said the accused Syed Aminul Islam and Yusuf Ali were absconding, reports UNB.

Exhibition on theatre opens

A week-long exhibition on 'Bangla Theatre and International Interaction' was inaugurated in Dhaka yesterday by Ms Margaret Semil, president of the ITI communication committee at the Institute of Fine Arts. Earlier, Syed Shamsul Haq and Mafidul Haq welcomed the guests, reports BSS.

BFUJ emergency meet today

An emergency meeting of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) will be held at the union office at the National Press Club today at 10-30 am. All members have been requested to attend the meeting, reports BSS.

Thousands arrested across Pakistan as they defy ban to converge on Islamabad

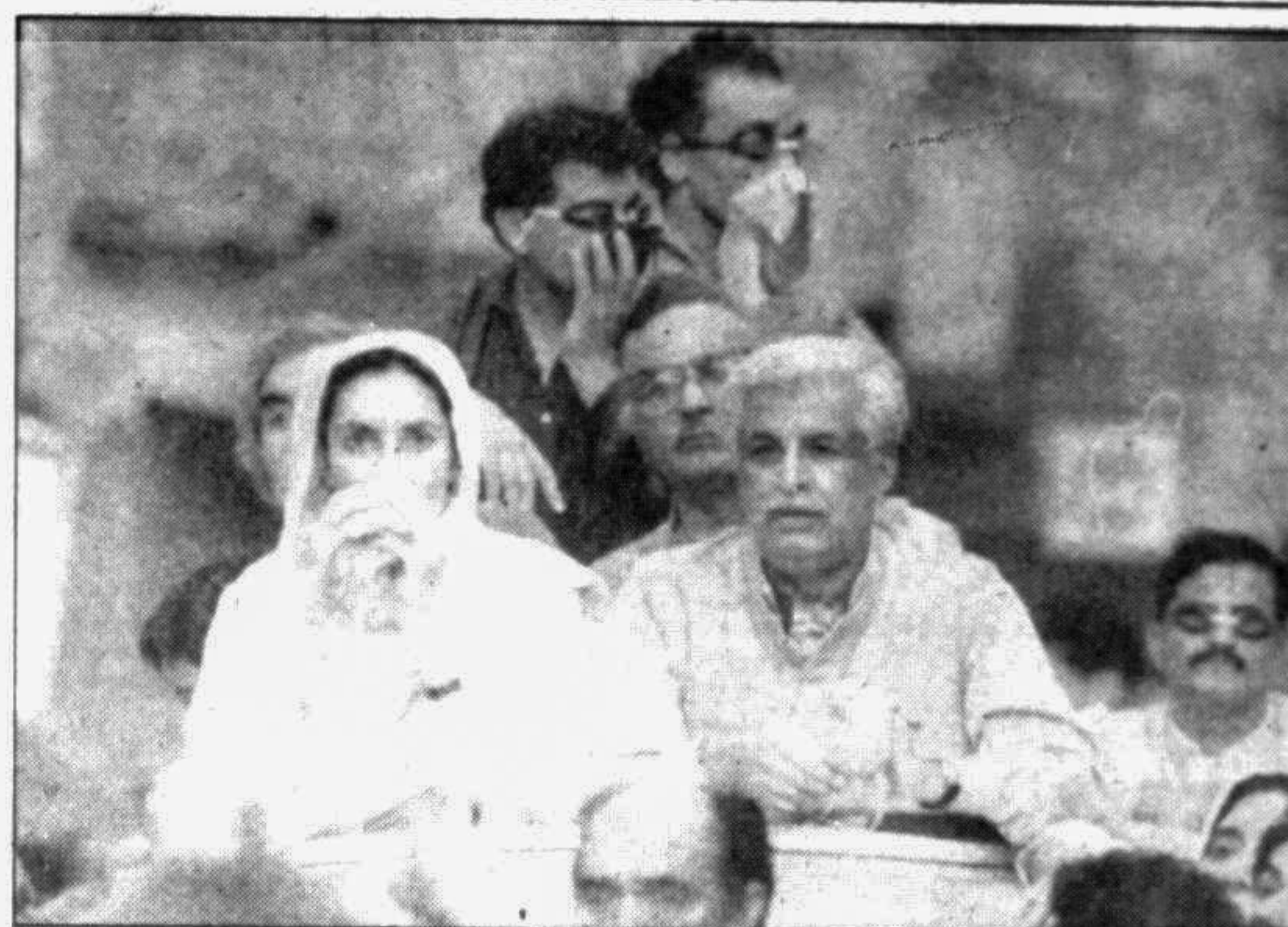
Police use baton on Benazir, take her into custody

RAWALPINDI, Nov 18: Police arrested former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Wednesday after she and supporters broke through police barricades to lead a banned anti-government protest, reports AP.

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18: The government today expelled Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto from Islamabad for 30 days after temporarily keeping her and some other leaders in 'protective' custody, an official announcement said. Opposition and informed sources here said Bhutto was being flown to her southern hometown of Karachi by a late night Pakistan International Airlines domestic flight. A government spokesman late Wednesday categorically dispelled speculations that she had been arrested, reports AFP.

Government sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Ms Bhutto was driven to a state guest house, where she would stay overnight before being flown to Karachi, her hometown, and probably be placed under house arrest. "My arrest won't make any difference. The struggle will continue," she told a crowd of 30,000 to 40,000 supporters, who endured steady bursts of tear gas.

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Former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (left) covers her nose as police tear-gas crowds of people trying to join her long march to Islamabad yesterday. — AFP photo

Politically defeated forces creating anarchy: Khaleda

RAJSHAHI, Nov 18: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today strongly criticised the agitational programmes of a section of opposition parties and said the politically-defeated forces were now out to create anarchy to hinder the development process, reports BSS.

She said the forces which were rejected by the people for their past misdeeds had now been hatching conspiracies against the BNP by resorting to hartals and street agitations to obstruct the development programmes of the government.

Addressing a big public meeting at Madrasa Maidan here, Begum Zia said these forces were resorting to hartals on flimsy grounds and creating unreasonable issues which, she added, would not help resolve the people's problems of food, clothing, shelter and education.

She wanted to know what was the necessity of hartals, strikes and street agitations now when a government elected through free and fair polls was working and urged the people to unitedly resist those quarters which were out to destroy the country and its development process at the dictate of their foreign masters.

Education Minister

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Red Cross to help build cyclone shelters

By Staff Correspondent

The International Red Cross will provide Taka 88 crore to Bangladesh for the construction of cyclone shelters and for its cyclone preparedness programme.

This was disclosed Wednesday at a press conference at a local hotel by the visiting International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) President Dr Mario Enrique Villarreal Lander.

"We came here specially to have a better relationship with the National Committee of Red Crescent here and we also had an opportunity to show our appreciation for the great support the Society gets from the government," said Dr Villarreal at the end of his three-day visit here.

He assured providing Bangladesh with continued support on a priority basis. "I want to assure all that we will continue to help for the different areas," he said.

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Education must be linked with production: PM

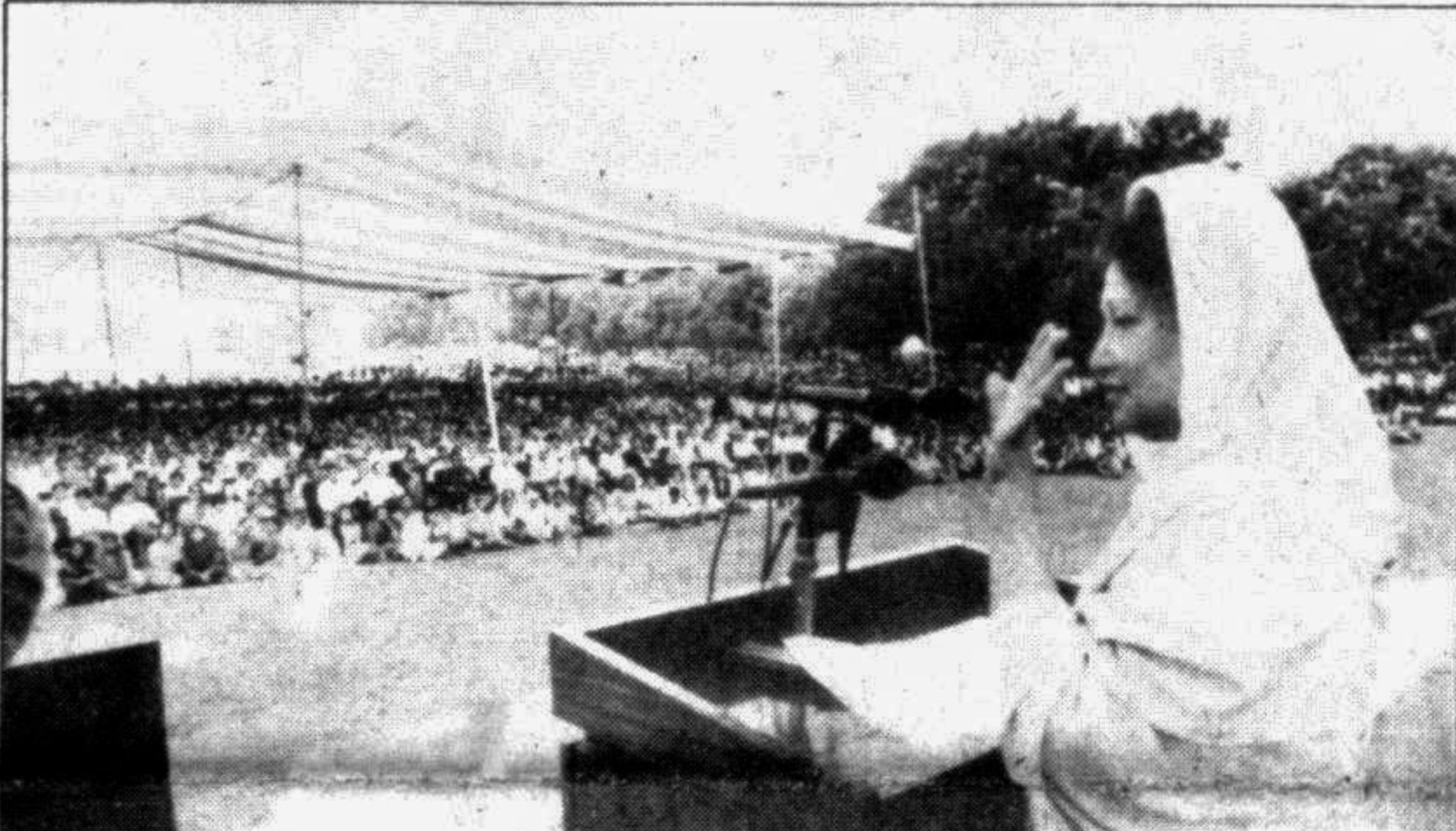
RAJSHAHI, Nov 18: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said her government is pledged to materialise the ideals of the Liberation War by ensuring democracy, development and education for the people, reports UNB.

"We have achieved democracy, development works are going on and education has been given top priority," Begum Zia told a rally of teachers, students and employees of Rajshahi University in front of 'Shabash Bangladesh' sculpture on the campus.

She said education won't do any good in the nation unless it is production-oriented.

The institutions of higher education should have autonomy and the actual autonomy

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a gathering of teachers, students and employees of Rajshahi University in front of the 'Shabash Bangladesh' yesterday. — PID photo

SAARC under pressure to talk regional conflicts

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Politics will continue to stay sidelined in the affairs of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) although there are suggestions that the seven nation alliance discuss vexed bilateral issues to defuse tension in the troubled region.

According to SAARC diplomats based in Dhaka, the Seventh Summit scheduled for December 12-14 in the city will ignore the plea, likely to be placed by at least one of the member countries.

In recent days, there has been insistence that it is time the seven-year-old forum, that begins its second cycle of summits in its birthplace, talked issues, other than the socio-economic ones, that often threaten peace and vitiate regional atmosphere.

The most recent one came from the countries' opposition leaders who sat together for the first time and took part in a seminar on their role in Karachi last September.

The SAARC Charter bars members from raising "bilateral and contentious" issues in the meetings of the grouping, headquartered in Kathmandu, that holds a summit annually, a meeting of foreign ministers in every six months and numerous other sessions attended by bureaucrats, experts and professionals to address a host of socio-economic agenda.

According to the diplomats, the Dhaka summit may witness a proposal from a member country to allow deliberations

on bilateral conflicts falling flat amid opposition from at least one fellow member, if not more.

"Shri Lankan leader (Ranasinghe) Premadasa will definitely raise the issue," said one diplomat who invoked the concluding part of the President's speech at the Colombo Summit where he touched upon the point so that the "collective voice can be heard beyond our shores."

Host President Premadasa told the delayed Sixth Summit delegates, although in somewhat vague terms, that bilateral conflicts should be discussed at least "at the personal level" among the heads of state and government at their annual gathering.

But the possible Shri Lankan proposal, even if raised at informal meetings, will be blackballed by India, the diplomats predict recalling a Rajiv Gandhi statement six years ago.

SAARC leaders to arrive in Dhaka Dec 11: Mostafiz

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman yesterday said South Asian leaders had responded positively for making next month's Dhaka summit of SAARC a success.

All summiters are expected to arrive in Dhaka December 11, one day ahead of the summit December 12-14, Mostafiz said on return yesterday evening from visit to three SAARC capitals.

He was talking to UNB at the airport on return from a week-long sojourn in three member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation where he had conveyed invitation to the SAARC leaders to attend the 7th SAARC summit.

As the host country, Dhaka diplomats say, Bangladesh may keep mum to avoid any possible embarrassment on its part. According to the SAARC Charter, decisions at all levels in SAARC are taken on the basis of unanimity.

Yugoslavia's neighbour Romania said Wednesday it had begun stopping Danube River shipping bound for Yugoslavia in a bid to enforce the UN sanctions.

The UN embargo has been widely circumvented, primarily by goods carried on trucks or by boats on the Danube.

Romania Deputy Transport Minister Calin Martinescu said Chinese vessel You Yi 22, pushing five barges loaded with copper products, and some Ukrainian and Russian ships were stopped. After their documents and cargo were checked, they would be either allowed to proceed or held, officials said.

The embargo aims to punish Yugoslavia - reduced to Serbia and Montenegro - for supporting Serb nationalists who have seized 70 percent of Bosnia since the republic's majority Muslims and Croats voted for independence last spring.

The announcement from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation came after a regular weekly meeting of NATO ambassadors.

"NATO forces would coordinate and cooperate with the WEU and possibly other countries" to impose the UN trade

embargo, the statement said. It said specific decisions on implementing the blockade would be made after consultations with NATO military officials.

Frequent JS boycott cripples democracy, says Kamal

By Staff Correspondent

Democratic Forum convenor Dr Kamal Hossain said last evening that his Forum had been working with a view to creating socio-political awareness among the 'silent majority' of the people.

An optimistic Hossain told newsmen at his residence that the silent majority of the country's 12 crore people would virtually come up with the demand of their constitutional rights.

The MPs voted to parliament should not forget the interests of the common people.

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Cyclone intensifies

A severe cyclonic storm with a core of hurricane wind over south east Bay and adjoining areas moved north north-westwards and was centred at 9 pm last night about 1080 kilometres southwest of Chittagong port, reports UNB.

It is likely to intensify further and move in a north north-westerly direction at a speed of about 20 kilometres per hour, a Met office special bulletin said.

Maximum sustained wind within 74 kilometres of the hurricane centre is about 150 kilometres per hour rising to 170 kph in gust or squall.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep posted distant warning signal number 2.

Wrong policy has made nation poorer: Hasina

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina lashed out at the government's economic policy which, she said, had turned the country into a market of foreign products.

Stressing on export-oriented economy, she said, "we must go for more production and export, and raise the purchasing power of the common man."

"The difference between the ruling party and the Awami League is that they are for import-oriented economy and we for production and export-oriented economy," Hasina said in an exclusive interview with UNB Chief Editor Enayeturrahman Khan.

In a dramatic move early this year, Awami League switched to free market economy from its policy of socialist economy. This, she said, was done to "fit in with the changed world economic order and prevailing national socio-economic and political condition."

The Awami League President was dead set against regulatory measures which stood in the way of industrial growth. "The role of the state in industrialisation should be catalytic and complementary the state should take the charge of maintaining stability."

She said wrong policy pursued since the August 15 changeover in 1975 had made the nation poorer. About 37 per cent farmers are now landless and 80 per cent of the people are living below the poverty line. Situation in both agriculture and industrial sectors is frustrating, she observed.

Hasina ridiculed the views of certain quarters that her party was "soft" towards India. "It's a sad propaganda dished out by the adversaries," she lamented and reminded her opponents that Awami League during its rule had resolved many a crisis with India with honour and dignity, and "never bowed down to international

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NATO allies agree to enforce naval blockade on Y'slavia

BRUSSELS, Nov 18: The NATO allies agreed Wednesday to help impose a naval blockade on Yugoslavia in an effort to force a halt to the ethnic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AP.

Romania said it has begun searching Danube River ships heading towards Yugoslavia for cargo banned by a UN embargo.

In a statement, the 16 NATO members said they would cooperate with the Western European Union, a

nine-nation group being developed as the defence arm of the European Community.

Foreign and defence ministers from the union nations intend to plan the blockade Friday during a meeting in Rome, a union official who spoke on condition of anonymity said Tuesday.

Nine or 10 frigates from the two groups have been monitoring shipping on the Adriatic Sea. Monday, the UN Security Council voted to allow moni-

tors to stop suspected sanction violators, strengthening a 6-month-old UN trade embargo.

Western warships may even open fire if necessary, UN diplomats said, as they are allowed in enforcing embargo of Iraq.

Yugoslavia's neighbour Romania said Wednesday it had begun stopping Danube River shipping bound for Yugoslavia in a bid to enforce the UN sanctions.

The UN embargo has been widely circumvented, primarily by goods carried on trucks or by boats on the Danube.

BDR-BSF meet Nov 21

LALMONIRHAT, Nov 18: A high-level flag meeting between BDR and BSF will be held on November 21 in a bid to defuse tension created in the Indo-Bangladesh frontier by the Indian 'Operation Push Back', reports UNB.

BDR Sector Commander Col Kamal will lead the Bangladesh side and DIG of Coochbihar SF Kutial will head the BSF team at the meeting at Burimari border, officials here said today.

Meanwhile, truckloads of Bangla-speaking Muslims, herded by BSF across the border here for pushing into Bangladesh, are being shifted to areas opposite Bhurungamari border in Kurigram district.

The Indian Border Security Force re-arranging push-in of the victims in the face of strong vigilance put up by BDR and villagers in Lalmonirhat border areas.

None could be pushed in the last 24 hours due to the resistance against the illegal deportation bid.

Earlier on Tuesday, BDR lodged protest against the Indian operation at a company-level flag meeting at Daikhawya border.

Rehan's arrest AJM tense, rallies demand release

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 18: A tense situation prevailed in the Adamjee Jute Mills premises today as workers brought out processions and held rallies demanding immediate release of Rehanuddin Rehan.

The President of the Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) of the Adamjee Jute Mills, Rehan, was arrested by police Tuesday morning on five charges.

The workers held a demonstration in the mills premises at 10.30 am. Production of the mills remained suspended for half an hour due to this.

A rally organised by CBA Vice-President Bara Rashid was held in front of Rehan's house at Sunilpara at 6.30 pm.

The speakers at the rally protested the arrest and warned the government of dire consequences.

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