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BNP, Opposition reject each other's formula Stalemate persists

By Nurul Kabir

The bogged-down dialogue between the country's opposing political camps to resolve the present impasse is yet to show any signs of resumption in the immediate future.

Till last night the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Opposition parties in Parliament continued to reject each other's formula for a caretaker government for holding general elections.

Ruling party negotiators are learnt to have officially proposed Monday a multi-party interim cabinet, headed by incumbent prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia, to conduct the next general elections.

The BNP proposal, an eight-page printed document handed over to the Commonwealth Secretary General's envoy Sir Ninian Stephen, suggested that a ten-member mini-cabinet headed by Khaleda Zia be formed comprising "Parliament members, including those belonging to the Opposition benches" to hold the elections.

The formula, while proposing the composition of the interim cabinet, said that five legislators from the ruling party and four from the Opposition should constitute the interim cabinet.

The BNP formula also maintained that there should be no bar for the interim cabinet members to contest the elections or campaign for their respective party colleagues.

Other than the composition of the proposed cabinet and its members' terms of reference, the BNP documents put forward arguments against the Opposition formula handed over to Sir Ninian on November 3, sources close to the ruling party negotiating team told The Daily Star.

On the other hand, the Opposition proposal, a four-page printed document, suggested that the ruling party and the parliamentary Opposition would select, "through consultations," a non-partisan caretaker prime minister.

The Opposition formula also maintained that the members of the caretaker cabinet should abstain from contesting the next national polls.

The BNP negotiators rejected the idea Monday and placed their own plan Monday afternoon.

Sir Ninian's aide Christopher, See Page 12 Col 7

Solidarity Day observed

By Staff Correspondent

The National Revolution and Solidarity Day was observed throughout the country on Monday marking the sepooy-people uprising in 1975 against an attempt to jeopardise the country's independence.

Different political and socio-cultural organisations held discussion meetings, seminars, milad mahfils, rallies and processions on the occasion.

Monday was a public holiday.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia laid wreaths at the mazar of Shahid President Ziaur Rahman and offered munajat.

Leaders of the ruling BNP and its front organisations also placed wreaths at the mazar.

The national flag flew atop public and private buildings.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh put out special programmes.

See Page 12 Col 3

Rallies, processions banned Opposition stages sit-in today

By Staff Correspondent

Three major opposition parties — the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — plan a sit-in in front of the Prime Minister's secretariat in the city today to realise their demand for elections under a caretaker administration.

Meanwhile, the authorities, by imposing Section 144, have banned all demonstrations, rallies, processions and other forms of agitation in the areas surrounding the PM's secretariat for 24 hours beginning at zero hours Tuesday night.

The Opposition planned the sit-in as the culmination of their separate 40-day agitation programmes announced earlier to force the government to accept the demand.

The supporters of the three opposition parties are to assemble at various points in the city before marching towards the PM's secretariat at 10 in the morning.

The Awami League will hold its rally at the Bijoy Sarani, the Jatiya Party at the Mahakhali level-crossing and the Jamaat at the Maghbazar crossing.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner has banned protest rallies around the PM's office in apprehension of a breach of the peace.

The DMP Commissioner, in a press release, mentioned the areas as follows.

Bangla Motors crossing, See Page 12 Col 6

Baghdad recognises Kuwait

MOSCOW, Nov 8: Iraq has recognised the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait as set out by UN Security Council Resolution 833, the Russian Foreign Ministry said today, reports AFP.

It said that President Boris Yeltsin had asked Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to make an early visit to Baghdad to take part in the carrying out of the constitutional procedures arising from Iraq's decision.

The ministry said Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz gave Kozyrev a letter recognising the sovereignty and frontiers of Kuwait from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The letter was addressed to Yeltsin.

The decision must be ratified by the Iraqi parliament, as seen by Page 12 Col 5

News Analysis

High time for national reconciliation

By Chapal Bashir

While the political imbroglio persists, over the caretaker government issue, three major opposition parties — the Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party (JP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami — are scheduled to stage their sit-in demonstrations in front of the Prime Minister's secretariat today.

The opposition views this programme as marking the beginning of the final phase of their on-going agitation to realise their demand for holding the next general elections under a neutral, non-party caretaker government.

The law-enforcing agencies have also taken precautionary measures, prohibiting any gathering around the PM's office.

The Opposition's programme and government's preventive actions may result in undesirable eventualities if both sides fail to maintain restraint and keep the situation under control. Any untoward incident will only vitiate the political situation which is passing through a crucial phase. Therefore, good sense should prevail and it is the responsibility of all to uphold the democratic process and to let it flourish.

The combined opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad has already decided to resign en masse from parliament to force the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party to accept the demand.

See Page 12 Col 4

Tariqul takes oath as MP

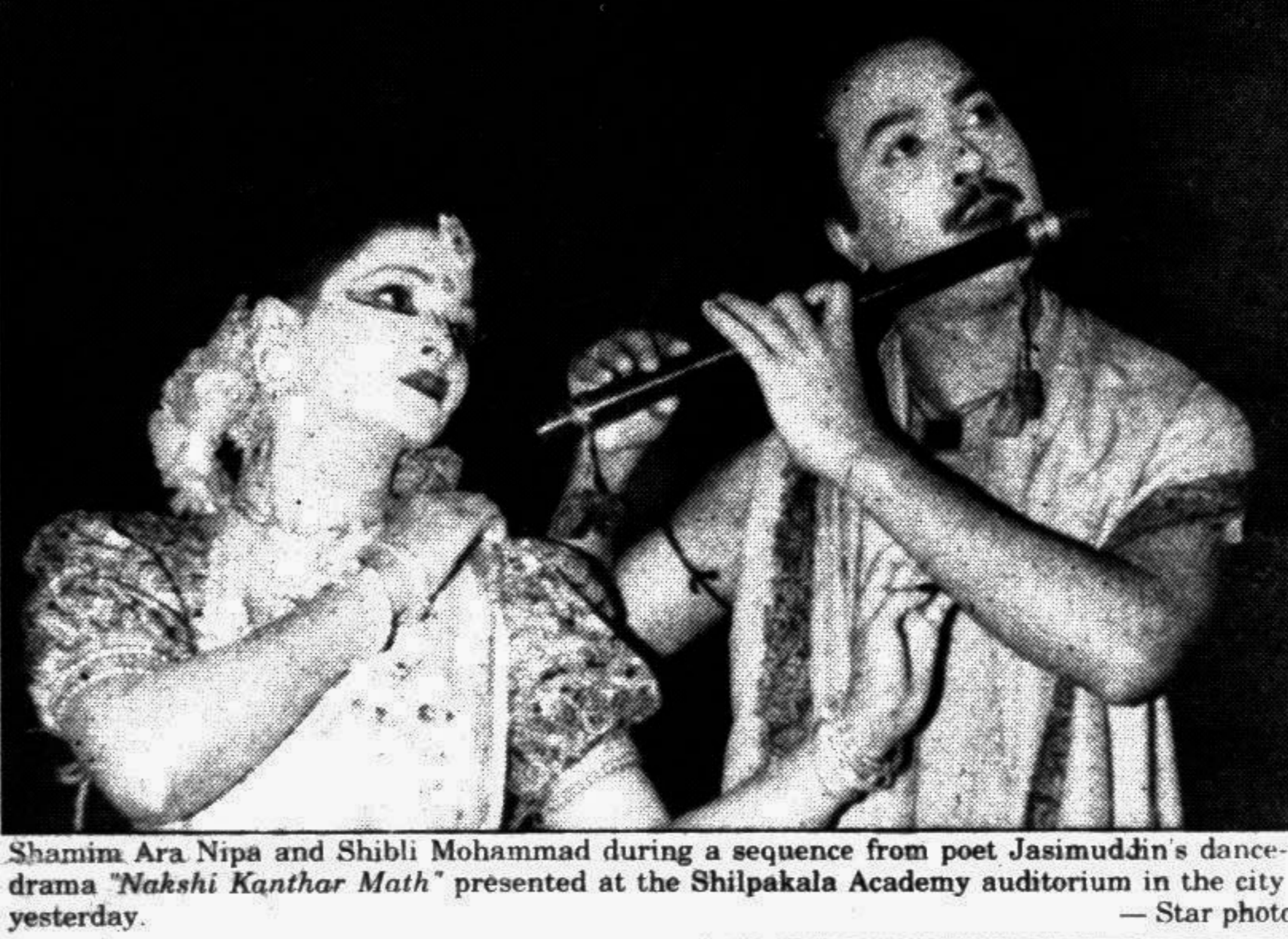
Tariqul Islam, who was elected member of Parliament unopposed from Jessore-3 constituency in a by-election held recently, took oath of office at a simple ceremony at Sangsad Bhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali administered the oath.

It may be mentioned that Jessore-3 seat had fallen vacant following the death of Rowshan Ali MP of the Awami League.

Tariqul Islam, Minister for Post and Telecommunications, has been elected unopposed from the constituency as a BNP nominee.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and Secretary-General of BNP Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Chief Whip Khondker Delwar Hossain, Whip Mahbubul Alam Tara and Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat Abul Hashem were present on the occasion.



Shamima Ara Nipa and Shibli Mohammad during a sequence from poet Jasimuddin's dance-drama "Nakshik Kanchar Math" presented at the Shilpkala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday.

JCD activist's tendons severed at JU

From JU Correspondent

A group of students severed the tendons of a student's leg on the Jahangirnagar University campus yesterday evening.

Anwar Zahid Talukder, a first year Honours student of history and a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activist, was kidnapped by a group of rival JCD activists at around 2 pm from near the Jahangirnagar University School, witnesses said.

Anwar was rescued in a serious condition at around 5 pm from the Al-Beruni Hall premises. He was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The incident was reportedly a sequel to intense rivalry between two JCD groups. The JU JCD is divided between the activists living near the campus — known as locals — and those coming from different districts or non-locals.

See Page 12 Col 2

Diplomatic circles strive hard for a resolution

By M Anwarul Haq

Diplomats of major western and Commonwealth countries are trying to impress upon both the ruling party and the Opposition that their failure to solve the current political impasse will eventually push the country towards uncertainty and may cause a premature demise of democracy.

Both sides are being told that the future of democracy and development in Bangladesh would be seriously jeopardised if they fail to take advantage of Sir Ninian's facilitatory role," said an ambassador of a leading NATO country.

Kidnappers kill mother, son in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Nov 8: A group of miscreants kidnapped one Mazeda Khatun (30) and her son Masud Ahmed (12), and later killed them in Kailadil village under Royganj Thana.

Police said, the mother and her son were kidnapped at around 9 pm Saturday from their house as a sequel to a land dispute.

Earlier an influential person, See Page 12 Col 8

Conspiracy on to foil dialogue, says Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday cautioned that conspiracy is being hatched to foil the Commonwealth-brokered dialogue and push the country towards uncertainty, reports UNB.

Addressing the congress of Awami Juba League at Ramna Green yesterday afternoon, she criticised the ruling party's obstinacy over a neutral caretaker government to ensure people's right to voting.

"We want constitutional provision so that at least three general elections are held under a neutral caretaker government to ensure peaceful transition of power through free and impartial voting," Hasina said.

She mentioned BNP's participation in last parliamentary polls under a caretaker government and questioned why they were "so scared" of it.

"Even many ministers of BNP who realise the logic behind caretaker government are being victimised as the Prime Minister doesn't want it," the Opposition leader told the meeting.

Indicating the ruling party's proposal she said "We don't want sharing of power, we want people's voting rights and their security through constitution."

See Page 12 Col 8

Sherpur gets gas supply

SHERPUR, Nov 8: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today reiterated her government's resolve to ensure balanced distribution of the country's available resources, reports UNB.

"Despite constraints we are implementing development programmes one after another to build up a strong economic base within the minimum possible time," she said.

Begum Zia was inaugurating gas supply to Sherpur town set up as part of a TK 322 crore Brahmaputra Basin Project implemented with Substantial ADB assistance.

She switched open the gas valve to mark the inauguration at the local Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution office premises.

Initially, some 600 subscribers of the town will have the benefit of using natural gas while nearly 5,000 connections are being planned over a period of five years for the district.

Since the country's first natural gas reserve was struck in 1955 marking a new era of commercial use of gas, expansion of gas distribution network continued to expand, Begum Zia said.

She underscored the need for reducing dependence on gas.

See Page 12 Col 3

No alternative to BNP, Khaleda tells rally

SHERPUR, Nov 8: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today reiterated her party's readiness to resolve national problems through talks within the purview of the Constitution, reports UNB.

"All national problems can be solved in the light of Constitution and through talks. There is no scope for creating unnecessary issue because we have a Constitution," she said in an apparent reference to the opposition stance.

Addressing a mammoth public meeting at Sherpur Poura Park ground this afternoon after inaugurating gas supply to the district, Begum Zia made it clear that her party would never bow to any injustice and always stand against it.

She said the BNP government works for boosting production and changing the lot of commonman and hence there is no alternative to BNP in the country.

The Prime Minister said her government's programmes and policies are aimed at the development of socio-economic condition of the people and it had always upheld the interest of the country.

Education is now reaching the doorstep of the people as a result of the government's programmes, she said and added that the politics of hoax, tall talks and falsehood would no longer survive in the country.

The Prime Minister said the opposition had become unnerved seeing the development spree in the country and indulged in various destructive activities like hartal, arson, damaging public property instead of cooperating in the people's welfare programmes.

"They do not talk about the development of the country, improvement of lot of the people, education and employment. They only create unnecessary issues to obstruct government's development efforts and increase suffering of the people," she told the gathering.

She said the country would be self-sufficient in near future if the present trend of development continued and called upon the people to extend their support to the people's welfare programmes undertaken by the government.

Local leaders put forward various demands, including construction of roads and bridges, nationalisation of educational institutions and additional financial support, extension of telecommunication system, construction of stadium.

See Page 12 Col 7

Munna murder 8 JCD activists held in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Nov 8: Kotwali police arrested eight activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal yesterday for their alleged complicity in the killing of Enamul Haque Munna, general secretary Sylhet town unit of JCD.

On getting secret information, a contingent of special police raided a house of Shahjalal Upashahar area yesterday afternoon and arrested them. They are Enamul Hossain Tipu, Ali Ahmed, Rezaul Karim Nachan, Miftah Siddique, Masum Iftakhar Rasul, Jalal Kibria Murad, Hasan Ali Faruk.

See Page 12 Col 8

3 Shibir activists hurt as gunmen fire on CU bus

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 8: Three Shibir activists were hurt when unidentified gunmen opened fire on them.

They were returning from Chittagong University in a bus on Monday.

The Islamic Chhatra Shibir CU unit said, the two seriously injured — Moshatq Ahmed, a second year student of Accounting, and Kamrul Hassan, a first year student of Statistics — were admitted to a local clinic.

Shibir blamed the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) for the attack at the CU road number 1, apparently in reprisals for the killing of a JCD leader.

JCD has denied its involvement.

See Page 12 Col 8

Lanka's presidential 'battle of widows' today

COLOMBO, Nov 8: Sri Lanka's presidential "battle of the widows" will be decided on Wednesday when 11 million voters cast ballots that could hasten the end of a bloody civil war and decide the constitutional future of their island state, reports Reuters.

The voters will propel either Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga or the opposition United National Party's Srimala Dissanayake into the most powerful post in the troubled land of nearly 18 million.

The widows, who both lost their husbands to political assassinations, have both promised peace but have sharply differed through a bitter campaign about how to end 11 years of revolt in the 3.2 million Tamil minority community, which has killed more than 30,000 people.

"If Kumaratunga wins a big victory, chances of peace talks being resumed soon are very bright," said Paikaisothy Saravanamuttu, a political analyst at Colombo University.

Kumaratunga, 49, whose father and mother, the assassinated Solomon Bandaranaike and his widow, Srimala, both served as prime minister before her, led her people's alliance to victory in August parliamentary elections to end the UNP's 17 years of rule.

She has promised to scrap the executive presidency by July, 1995, and restore parliament's supremacy, saying a powerful presidency is open to abuse.

Soon after she became prime minister, she set up a parliamentary select committee to suggest changes in the constitution.

Kumaratunga, whose husband, film-star and politician Vijaya, was killed by leftists in 1988, is widely expected to win Wednesday's poll, with the help of the Tamil and Muslim minority votes.

The opposition candidate, Srimala Dissanayake, a 51-year-old lawyer, has pledged to fulfill the wishes of her husband, Gamage, the original opposition candidate, who was killed along with 53 others by a suicide bomber at a campaign rally on October 24.

He supported plans to reduce the powers of the presidency.

In the past week the two widows have traded charges on parliament.

See Page 12 Col 7

Dhaka-KL MOU for air services

A memorandum of understanding for bilateral air services was signed between Bangladesh and Malaysia at Biman Bhaban in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Under the MOU, designated airlines of the two countries initially would be able to operate five flights a week.

According to the accord, the number of flights could be increased to seven per week upon the growth of passengers and cargo in near future.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Nooruddin Ahmed Almasood and Secretary General of the Ministry of Transport of Malaysia Wan Awang bin Wan Yaacob initialled the memo on behalf of their respective governments.

The MOU also provides opportunities for operating two intermediate and three beyond-the-points flights of the designated airlines of Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Boycott of JS by Opposition High Court to hear writ today

By Staff Correspondent

The writ challenging the Opposition's boycott of Parliament and also Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed's application for time to submit a reply to the petition, will be heard today in the High Court.

Acting JP leader in Parliament Moudud Ahmed, yesterday filed a written application for four weeks' time to submit affidavit in opposition.

His prayer for time was based on the plea that the matter involves both point of law and public interest and also because of the fact that he had already signed a letter resigning from Parliament which he may submit anyday to the Speaker.

This was Moudud's fifth request for an adjournment of the proceedings.

The court comprising Justice Kazi Sheddudin and Justice A T Monwar Uddin allowed his prayer of adjournment on four previous occasions after the rule had been issued on June 28 last.

Sheikh Hasina Waheed, Leader of the Opposition, who is one of the respondents named in the writ, yesterday submitted her affidavit in opposition.

In her reply, she said the writ challenging the Opposition boycott in Parliament was not maintainable and was liable to be dismissed.

Anwar Hossain, advocate, See Page 12 Col 4

Yasin Russia's new economics minister

MOSCOW, Nov 8: President Boris Yeltsin today named Yevgeny Yasin as new Russian economics minister, a presidential spokesman said.

Yasin was head of the president's Centre for Economic Analysis and has taken part in the preparatory work for most of Russia's economic reform programmes. He has a reputation as a reformer and replaces Alexander Shokhin, who quit last week, reports Reuters.

17-member new Haitian cabinet

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Nov 8: Haiti's new prime minister and the 17-member cabinet, whose task is to turn around the country after three years of military repression, were sworn in Tuesday, reports AP.