

Elections to 4368 Union Parishads in Sept

By Staff Correspondent

Elections to 4,368 out of a total of 4461 Union Parishads of the country will be held from September 1 to 30 this year, an official announcement said yesterday.

The announcement said the government has decided to hold the elections to those Union Parishads in September because it will not be possible to hold the polls in time in view of demarcation of wards, recasting of voters list and SSC examinations. The SSC examinations are scheduled to be held in March and April.

The decision has been taken in exercise of the powers under sub-section (3) of Section 23 of the Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance 1983 (Ordinance II of 1983).

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Donors ask govt to raise oil, gas, fertiliser prices

By Staff Correspondent

Donors have asked the government to increase foreign exchange reserve, improve revenue collection, bridge fiscal deficit and increase prices of petroleum, gas and fertiliser.

This was disclosed to the press by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria at the end of the two-day mid-term briefing to the Bangladesh Aid Group that concluded in the city yesterday. World Bank resident representative Pierre Landell-Mills and Chief Economist in its Washington headquarters John Williamson also attended the press briefing.

Kibria said discussion on the macro-economic situation was constructive and it was found to be stable.

But the International Monetary Fund (IMF) suggested taking steps to increase the foreign exchange reserve. "We also feel that the reserve level should be

raised and are working toward that goal," he said.

Donors have expressed their concern that government-administered prices of some items like petroleum, gas and fertiliser do not reflect the market prices and that this is putting pressure on the revenue collection.

This situation is bringing distortion in the market and their prices should be adjusted upward, they suggested.

The finance minister said the suggestion for increasing petroleum, gas and fertiliser prices would be placed before the cabinet and the Prime Minister for consideration.

They also maintained that the government should reduce its control on fertiliser and market should determine its price.

The donors recommended expansion of tax base, rational-

isation of income tax and import duty, and improvement of tax administration to make up the shortfall in revenue collection.

They also recommended that domestic deficit should be bridged within the budgetary allocation.

ADP implementation should be improved and projects should be more carefully scrutinised to leave out low priority projects, they suggested.

Kibria said "We have pointed out that the conditionality of donors that lead to delay in ADP implementation."

The donors also asked the government to make a comprehensive policy statement on privatisation and said the government should consider the profitability of industries rather than book values when selling those.

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Chakma issue High-powered team leaves for Tripura today

By Staff Correspondent

A high-powered delegation led by Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasnat Abdullah is leaving for Tripura today on a mission to bring back thousands of tribespeople who fled there when hostilities renewed in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) following collapse of the peace talks in 1986.

The delegation will include members of the National Committee on CHT and officials of Foreign Ministry and the Special Affairs Division.

According to sources, the visit is considered crucial in view of the March 12 talks between the National Committee and the Parbatya Chattagram Janasanghati Samity (PCJSS), the political wing of the Chakma-dominated Shan-tibahini insurgents, who holds

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BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Feni Airport yesterday. — Star photo

AL MPs warned 'Mentor of terrorists won't be spared'

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has asked lawmakers belonging to her party to guard against terrorism and remain ever vigilant so that no terrorist could enter AL.

Hasina, also leader of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP), was presiding over a two-and-a-half hour meeting of the ALPP at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasnat Abdullah and 15 other ruling party deputies spoke at the meeting that took stock of the latest socio-economic and political situation in the country and decided to further strengthen the coordination between the party and the government, meeting sources said. Deputy Leader of the House and AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman was also present.

Speaking at the meeting, the AL lawmakers said though law and order in the country has improved to some extent, there remains a lot to be done. They said the strength of police force is not adequate, and they are also not well equipped to contain terrorist activities in the

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Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad receiving Prince Charles of Britain on his arrival at the Zia International Airport yesterday. — PID photo

Warm reception accorded Prince Charles meets President, PM today

Prince Charles of the United Kingdom who arrived here on a three-day visit yesterday wished Bangladesh peace, progress and prosperity, reports UNB.

"I am happy to be here. I look forward to meeting the people and the leaders of Bangladesh," he said talking to newsmen at the Zia International Airport on his arrival last night.

Referring to close ties between Dhaka and London, the Prince of Wales said it would be further strengthened.

He also mentioned presence of a large number of Bangladeshis in London, particularly from Sylhet district, who are contributing to the economy of his country.

Earlier, Prince Charles was accorded a warm reception at the airport.

A red carpet was rolled out to receive the heir to British throne as he flew into the Zia International Airport at about 8:40 pm.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad greeted the royal guest at the VVIP lounge of the

airport.

Two tiny tots presented the Prince of Wales with bouquet as he alighted from a special aircraft. The Prince, attired in a British traditional Royal suit, wished the children well.

High Commissioner of the UK David Critchlow Walker and members of the British community here were also present at the airport to welcome the eldest son of their Queen, who came here on the last leg of his four-nation Asian trip.

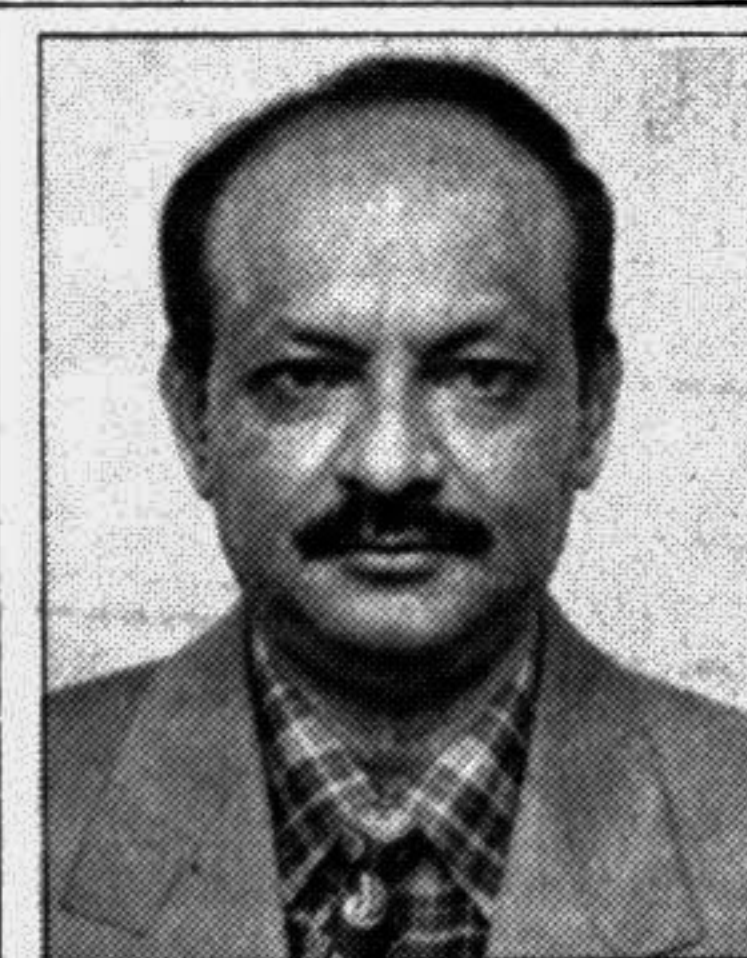
Members of the Cabinet, Dhaka Mayor Mohammad Hanif, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Shahida Zarah and senior civil and military officials were present.

The VIP roads were decorated with Bangladesh national flag and a British Union Jack on the occasion.

He came here ending his visit to three Gulf countries — Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. This is the first visit of the Prince of Wales to Bangladesh.

Airport formalities over, the Prince in a motorcade

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Golam Quddus' panel sweeps BGMEA polls

Sammlita Parishad swept the election of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' (BGMEA) Tuesday, reports UNB.

The Parishad, led by Mostafa Golam Quddus, Chairman of Dragon Sweater (Bangladesh), bagged seven out of nine vacant seats of the BGMEA executive committee.

Candidates of the Parishad who won the election are Mostafa Golam Quddus, Md Nu-

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B Chy alleges BCL attack in Feni, Zillur assures probe, action

By Staff Correspondent

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament Prof Badruddoza Choudhury alleged in the House yesterday that the car of a BNP lawmaker and some one dozen buses carrying people to the Leader of the Opposition and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia's public meeting at Feni on the day came under armed attacks.

Responding to the allegation, Deputy Leader of the House and LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman assured the House of punishing those responsible for the attacks, after impartial investigation into the matter.

Home Minister Maj. (Retd) Rafiqul Islam was not present in the House at the time.

The MP from Laxmipur sadar, Khairul Anam, and 30 to 35 supporters of BNP were injured in the attacks, learnt to have been made by the activists of Chhatra League, the student front of the ruling Awami League. Prof. Choudhury told the House demanding action

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Arsenic poisoning JS discussion postponed for lack of quorum

A scheduled discussion on Arsenic poisoning was postponed in Parliament last night, reports UNB.

This was the first time a discussion in the present Parliament was postponed for lack of quorum.

Abdul Latif Mirza of the ruling Awami League had submitted a call notice under 68 of the Rules of Procedure for discussion on Arsenic contamination in different parts of the country.

Speaking on the issue, Mirza called upon the Health Minister to take necessary measures to protect people from the new eruption of health hazard.

Nine MPs were scheduled to discuss the issue, but some of the discussants, including Advocate Rahmatullah, from the treasury bench were not present at that time.

BNP's Prof Shahidul Islam drew attention of the Deputy Speaker that there was no quorum and hence discussion cannot be held.

There were 37 Awami League and seven BNP members pre-

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Severe accommodation problem Prisoners sometimes sleep in shifts in Ctg jail!

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG Feb 25: Prisoners in the Chittagong jail sometimes have to sleep in shifts for lack of accommodation and over 90 per cent of the inmates suffer from skin disease and various other infectious diseases, according to sources in the jail.

The jail has a capacity to accommodate 747 prisoners but the number was always over 3000 during the last 10 years, an official said. At times, over 4000 prisoners are crammed in the jail, surrounded by residential buildings, shops and markets, threatening security, the official said.

"They are having a sub-human life. The environment inside the jail is horrible as excess number of prisoners are to stay there causing health hazards," the official said seeking anonymity.

"But we are undone to cope with the pressure of so many prisoners," he added.

There are 76 foreign nationals from Myanmar and Thailand in the jail now, another

source said.

Over 90 per cent of the prisoners suffer from skin disease and other infectious diseases, sources in the jail's medical unit said. There is only one medical ward having a capacity to treat 40 patients. But 80 to 100 patients come for treatment daily. Many prisoners die due to inadequate medicare facilities, they added.

In the past two weeks, at least five prisoners died at Chittagong jail, they said.

A plan for shifting the jail, built over 120 years ago in the heart of the city, remained shelved for the past 10 years, according to sources in the administration. Shifting of the jail has become uncertain, the sources said.

The plan for shifting the jail was undertaken by the government earlier due to the severe accommodation crisis.

However, officials concerned said that a process was underway to acquire land in Hathazari thana area outside the city for shifting the jail.

Ershad says Govt of consensus not a permanent settlement

By Staff Correspondent

An extended meeting of the Jatiya Party began yesterday in front of the Asiatic Printers in the city's Tejgaon industrial area.

The meeting decided to announce today the date for a public reception for the party chief HM Ershad at Manik Mia Avenue.

On the first day of the two day meeting, the report on organisational activities of the JP was presented by Anwar Hossain Manju, the Secretary General of the party while the welcome speech was delivered by Nazir Rahman Manju, the Additional Secretary General.

The party chief, in his inaugural speech, said the JP is the only nationalist force in the country. The party had distinct ideological differences with the Awami League, he said adding the nationalism of the BNP was confined only to its opposition to Awami League and India.

"The government of consensus is not a permanent settlement," Ershad said. The Jatiya Party's support to Awami

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Report on proposals for amending JS Rules of Procedure yet to be finalised

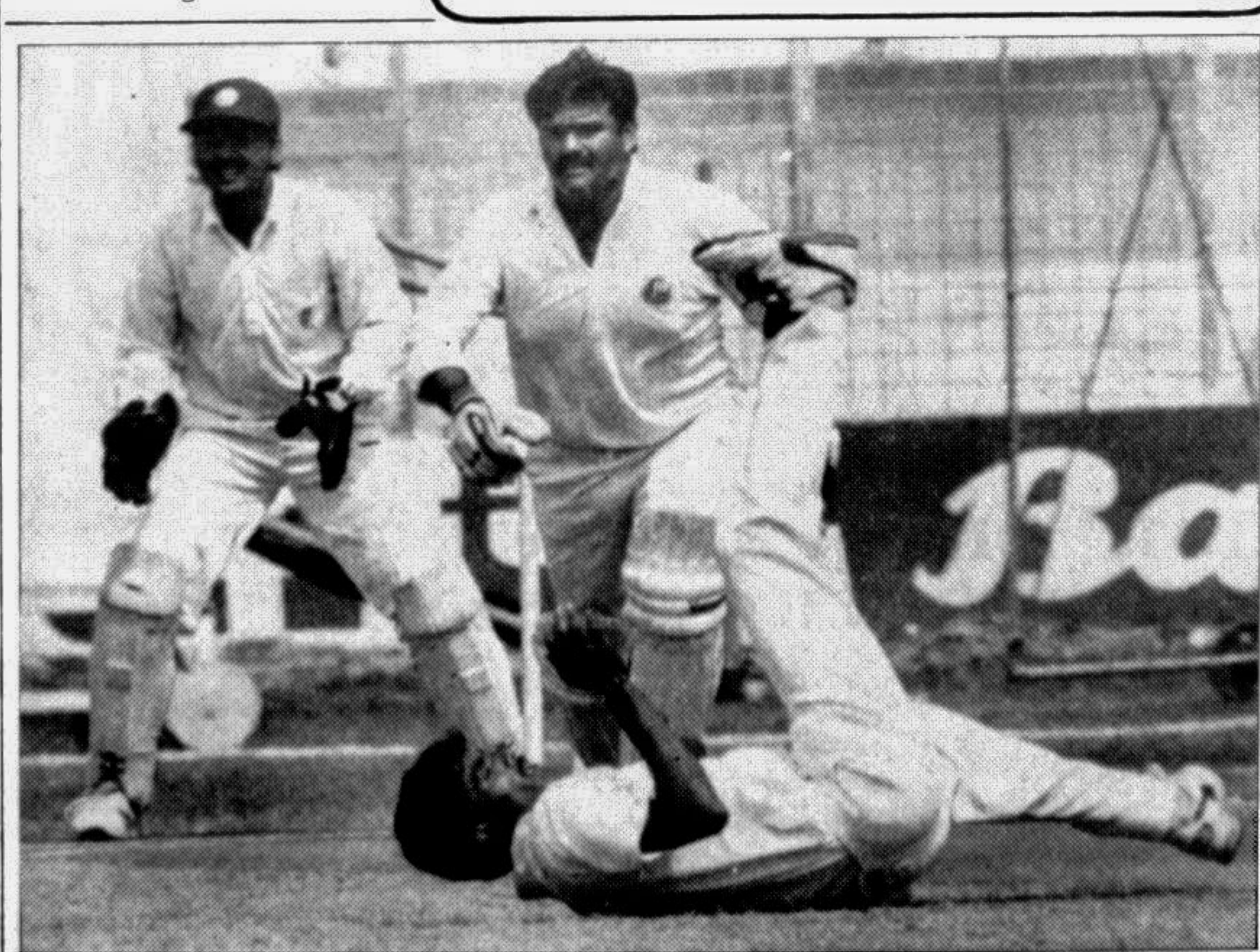
By Staff Correspondent

The Standing Committee on the Rules of Procedure of Jatiya Sangsad is yet to finalise its report on the proposals for amendments to the Rules due to the long standing dispute between Awami League and BNP over the distribution of membership on the JS bodies.

The last meeting of the committee held yesterday with Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury in the chair failed to finalise a draft report as they could not reach an agreement on the composition of the committees.

In constituting the standing bodies, the AL prefers to go by the precedence established in the fifth parliament of the country, while the BNP has been demanding that the membership should be distributed according to the parliamentary strength of various parties and groups.

However, Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta, Telecomunication Minister Mohammad Nasim and Chief Whip of the Opposition in Parliament Khandaker Delwar Hossain are scheduled to meet on Saturday to resolve the issue.



Bangladesh captain Akram Khan watches anxiously as India 'A' spinner Noel David goes down on the ground to make a stop off his own bowling. Later in the day Akram's anxiety turned into disappointment as the Indians ensured a berth in the final of the SAARC tournament with a seven-wicket victory over the hosts. India A will play Pakistan A in the finale on Friday. (Story on Page 10) — Star photo

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Prof Yunus tells South Asia Dialogue Micro-credit programme will have a countrywide impact

By Staff Correspondent

The countrywide micro-credit programme might look unattractive today but within a foreseeable future it is sure to create a national impact, Prof Mohammad Yunus, Managing Director of Grameen Bank, said yesterday.

He was speaking as the special guest on the second day of the Fifth South Asia Dialogue on Cultural Co-operation organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Today the micro-credit programme was just airborne like the first 12-second flight of the Wright Brothers in 1903. But wait, we will soon be flying Concorde and modern aircrafts," Prof Yunus said expressing his confidence about the future success of micro-credit programme in the country.

While speaking on "Women in Society", Prof Yunus said that the policies of the local banks were firstly 'anti-poor' and secondly 'anti-women'. "If

took us six years since 1976 to involve women in obtaining credit," he said. "To do this we had to create a counter-culture defiance, thus the woman found the process of unfolding herself."

Shabana Azmi, the renowned Indian film actress and an human rights activist, began presentation of her paper entitled "Images of Women in Hindi Cinema Post-1950's" by showing clips of several Hindi films on a TV screen.

"Unfortunately for the women of India, the example of Sita as the perfect wife acquiescing unquestioningly to her husband's rejection of her has been held up as the ideal for any women to follow," Shabana said.

"Popular Indian cinema created instant mythologies for uncritical consumption and not histories of credible people. The heroine is cast in two moulds. The all-forgiving, self-sacrificing wife; the virtuous upholder

of morality, the nurturing mother. And the other woman — vamp, titillating siren; courtesan with a heart of gold," Shabana said.

Referring to the film clips, Shabana added that the film image ostensibly celebrates the heroine's eroticism, while reducing her to a passive sex object. Shabana concluded her speech by saying that the quest for women's representation on the screen should move beyond just a critique of stereotyping of a more complex dialogue and debate about the plurality of women's imagery — a plurality that needed to recognise that women's representation could not be seen as only a positive or negative image but as an arena of contesting voices.

Sonal Mansingh, India's leading exponent of the Bharat Natyam, said that whereas in India no auspicious or festive occasion was deemed complete without a proper performance

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