

No breakthrough on first day of BNP-AL dialogue

By Nazmul Ashraf

Top negotiators of Awami League and BNP yesterday could not make any headway in removing the barriers to the latter's return to parliament when they sat across the table for four hours with the Speaker as the mediator.

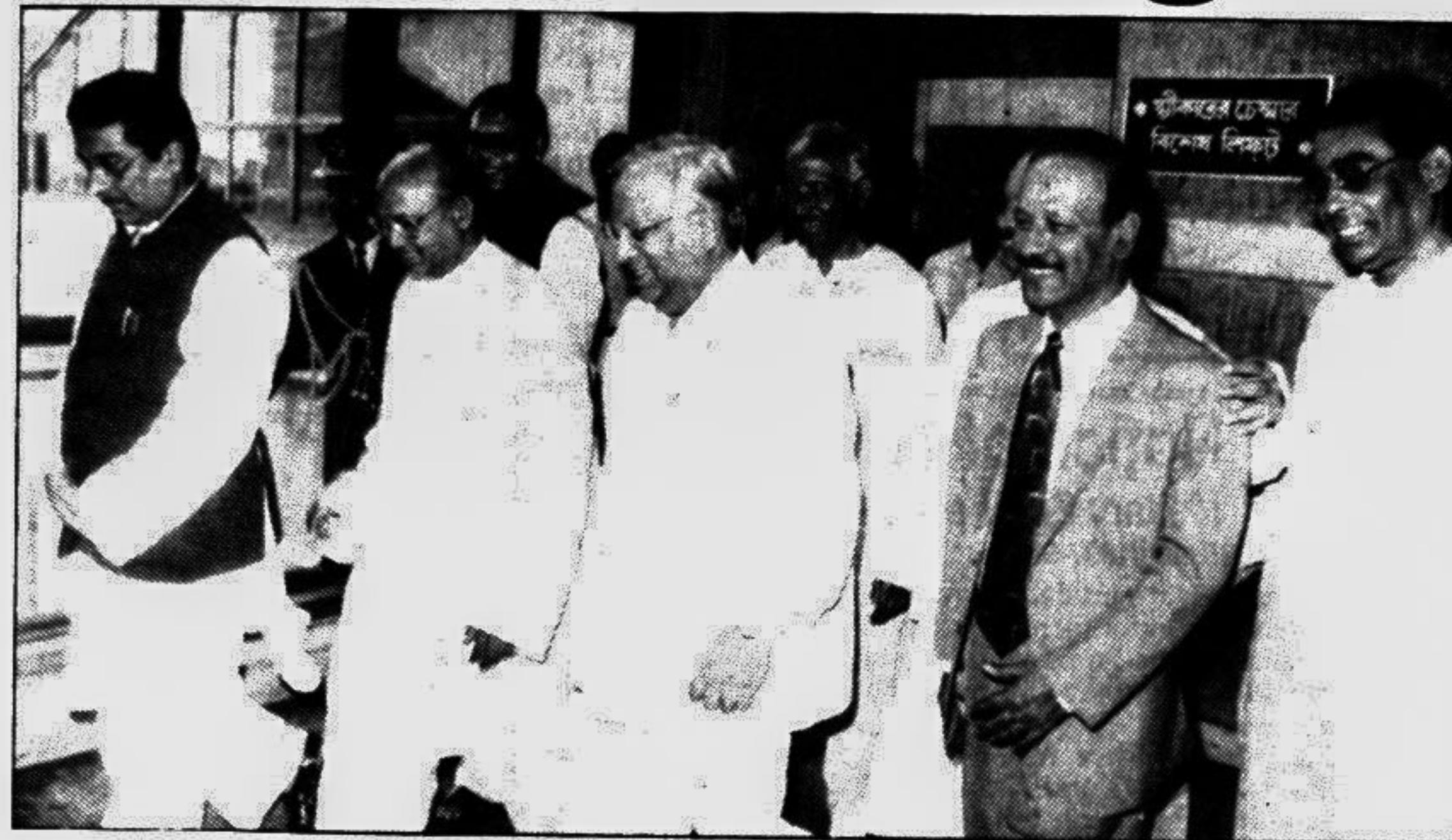
They adjourned the talks at 6.53 pm for resumption at 11 this morning.

Some of the key-negotiators on both the sides told The Daily Star that the discussions failed to make any breakthrough on BNP's demand for reinstatement of the floating bridge over the Crescent Lake and allowing public rallies on at least two city roads, Manik Mia Avenue and the Topkhana Road.

However, they said the meeting brought the two sides closer to resolving other issues like the four-point agreement on affairs of the parliament and withdrawal of political cases against some BNP lawmakers.

The key negotiators however

See Page 12 Col 7



Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury along with AL and BNP leaders entering his chamber at the Sangsab Bhaban yesterday for talks between the two sides. — Star photo

PM arrives in Rajshahi today

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Feb 27: Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will arrive here tomorrow on a two-day visit.

Some ministers and Awami League leaders will accompany her.

The Prime Minister will attend the coordination meeting on law and order at the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner in the evening and will hold a meeting with the leaders of local Awami League and its front organisations at the Zilla Parishad auditorium at night.

She will inaugurate the annual conference of the Engineers Institution, Bangladesh on the local IEB premises Sunday morning. Then she will leave Rajshahi for Naogaon. There the PM will address a public meeting at the A-Team maidan in the afternoon.

She will also inaugurate the bypass road, attend the coordination meeting on law and order and hold a meeting with local party leaders.

BNPPP meet resumes today

The adjourned meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party resumes today at 6:30 pm, reports UNB.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia will chair the meeting, to be held at the Opposition's conference room at the Sangsab Bhaban.

Inside Today

Article

Spectre that haunts the Banking Sector

Column: Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

Page 4

Star Literature

Growing up with music, and Utterances of Ramakrishna Parahamsa

Pages 6 & 7

BNP MPs made ministers to keep parliamentary system going: Manju

By Nurul Kabir

Jatiya Party Secretary General and Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju believes that the recent induction of two BNP lawmakers into the council of ministers was part of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's efforts to keep the parliamentary system going.

He said that the governments of both HM Ershad and Begum Khaleda Zia had to succumb to the boycott of parliament by the opposition parties in 1991 and 1996 respectively.

In both the cases, the opposition stood for some pro-people. See Page 12 Col 1

BNP-JP parley

Star Report

Exploratory talks between BNP and Jatiya Party were held recently, setting the stage for negotiations between the two parties to chart out a strategy to block possible attempts by the ruling Awami League to 'amend the Constitution', sources close to the two sides told The Daily Star last night.

Parleys between the two sides, led by mid-level leaders of BNP and the JP began following the recent defection by two BNP lawmakers and their induction into the Awami League-led government of consensus.

"She is not obliged to consult JP. But as far as I understand the issue, the Premier has taken

See Page 12 Col 3

Taxi cab service in city likely from June

By Staff Correspondent

Metresed Taxi Cab Service (MTCS), with centrally controlled radio-telephonic links, is likely to start operating on the city roads from June this year, officials said.

A maximum of 2000 such cars will operate in the city under the MTCS programme, a pilot project initiated by the government, the sources said.

Some 20 companies have so far applied to the government for registration. Many of them have already started the process to import vehicles.

Two types of vehicles, one having air conditioning facilities and the other without it, will operate in different city routes under the proposed programme.

Any private or public company having a paid up capital of Tk 10 lakh and tax payer identification number will be eligible.

See Page 12 Col 5



Visitors at the International Trade Fair '98 in the city yesterday.

— Star photo by Sheikh Enamul Haq

Attack on BCU procession at JU: 4 injured

By JU Correspondent

Four activists of Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) were injured when a group of pro-Awami League Chhatra League (BCL) workers attacked a BCU procession at Jahangirnagar University at around 11:30 pm on Thursday.

The injured were identified as Saikat Subhra, President of Chhatra Union JU unit, Aich Manan Ahsan Habib and Shmul.

BCL workers equipped with firearms and iron rods attacked the BCU procession at Basani hall. They also fired several rounds of gunshots during the attack.

BCU workers were protesting a decision of the JU authorities to raise meal charges.

The injured BCU activists were treated at JU medical centre and a clinic at Savar.

See Page 12 Col 8

Visitors crowding trade fair

By Rafiq Hasan and Govinda Shil

The Dhaka International Trade Fair '98 at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city is getting momentum as a large number of visitors are crowding the fair everyday to buy attractive products and fashionable goods.

Entrepreneurs from nine-teen foreign countries and host Bangladesh have set up several hundred stalls and large pavilions at the fair. The participants include some joint venture companies.

"We are getting good response from the visitors since the beginning of the exhibition", a salesman of a foreign electronics company said. The company, Kwangtia Pte Limited, have brought latest model Japanese electronics goods assembled in Singapore. The crowd is much larger this year than in previous years, he added.

Visitors, including women

and children, were seen standing in a long queue yesterday to buy entry tickets. The visitors are showing great interest in local and foreign electronic goods, food items, ornaments and jewellery, stone and marble products, cosmetics and gift items.

Some pavilions and stalls of foreign participants are yet to be completed. "A lot of items are yet to be released by the customs department," said a Pakistani participant.

A total of 26 organisations from Pakistan are taking part in the fair. They have been given a separate area in the southern side of the fair.

Eleven companies from Iran have set up stalls in three large pavilions. A large number of people were seen crowding the Iranian pavilions specially for delicious fruits, expensive Persian carpets, stone and gold ornaments and melamine products.

See Page 12 Col 4

CONGRATULATIONS

We congratulate Mr. Shamim Chowdhury, Director of M/S. Chowdhury Towels (pvt.) Ltd. 13/A, West End Street, Dhanmondi Central Road, Dhaka for conferring on him the Best Award for exporting Towels & Towel related products from Bangladesh to the Honourable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.



BANGLADESH TERRY TOWEL & LINEN MANUFACTURER'S & EXPORTER'S ASSOCIATION

Chevron-Texaco rejects equity sharing formula

Star Report

US joint venture Chevron-Texaco, which was asked to decide on becoming a partner of Irish company Tullow for exploration of oil and gas in Block 9, has rejected a government formula of equity sharing with the Irish company, indicating that it would withdraw from the negotiations on that block.

The joint venture further told the government that it would discontinue negotiations if the government disregarded the equity sharing formula it gave in the last government-moderated meeting between Chevron-Texaco and Tullow earlier this month.

Chevron-Texaco was asked by the government last week to talk with Tullow and decide on a equity formula under which Tullow would get 45 per cent of the block. Chevron-Texaco 45 per cent and BAPEX — the exploration wing of Petrobangla — the remaining 10 per cent.

Chevron-Texaco had, earlier this month, proposed a different equity sharing formula: 70 per cent for the joint venture. See Page 12 Col 7

Shell to take up multi-purpose gas projects

By Staff Correspondent

A team of top executives of oil giant Shell and its partner in Bangladesh, Cairn Energy, is now in the city to discuss their proposal for Block 9, sources said.

Shell-Cairn has been hammering its proposal to work in Block 9 although the government offered the block to Irish company Tullow and was trying to tag US joint venture Chevron-Texaco with Tullow.

Dr. Mark Modell Stewart, Chairman of Shell Transport and Trading Co Plc and Managing Director of the Committee of Managing Directors of the Royal Dutch Shell Group and Bill Gammel, chief of Cairn Energy met the Prime Minister, the Energy Minister and high officials of the government in the last two days. They will visit the Sangu Gasfield today.

Sources said that the Shell-Cairn joint venture had earlier expressed their interest to become a partner of US company Mobil and its partner Malaysian company Petronas — another aspirant for Block 9.

See Page 12 Col 3

2 SIs of Demra thana suspended

By Staff Correspondent

Two police Sub-Inspectors (SI) of Demra thana were suspended yesterday.

They are Mozaffar Hossain and Liakat Hossain.

The two SIs were suspended two days after the Home Minister gave an order to submit an investigation report on the killing of a new-born baby.

The incident had occurred on January 27. But police arrested two accused in the case — the mother and grandmother of the infant — on Tuesday. The accused persons allegedly threw the baby from their first floor residence at Dhania in Demra thana.

See Page 12 Col 4

Last round of polls in West Bengal, 9 other states today

CALCUTTA, Feb 27: Security has been beefed up in West Bengal and other places as the last round of Indian Lok Sabha elections will be held tomorrow in 131 constituencies spread over 10 states, reports BSS.

Elections to the state assemblies in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh will also be held simultaneously.

Tomorrow's elections will mark the completion of the election process in 538 of the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies. Polling in the remaining five constituencies will be held on March 7 and June 21 — after the completion of counting of votes beginning March 2.

The last round of elections will cover Maharashtra (24 constituencies), West Bengal (22), Madhya Pradesh (20), Kerala (20), Orissa (11), Gujarat (26), Himachal Pradesh (3), Goa (2) and Jammu and Kashmir and Tamil Nadu (one each).

Prominent among those contesting tomorrow's election include BJP President LK Advani and Promod Mahajan, Congress leaders Sharad Pawar, Madhavrao Scindia and AR Antulay, CPI leader Indrajit Gupta and Trinamul Congress leader Mamta Banerjee.

More than 14 crore voters are expected to exercise their franchise.

Meanwhile, security measures have been tightened in the West Bengal state where all the city constituencies have been declared sensitive.

Chief Election Officer J Sir said Trinamul Congress leader Mamta Banerjee in a fax to him expressed her apprehension of violence, particularly in the South Calcutta constituency from where she is contesting. She demanded deployment of four armed police in each polling booth.

Electoral authorities have

already taken steps to ensure peaceful polling. In addition to 22,000 state police, 44 company of central force will be deployed to maintain law and order during the polling, a high election official said.

The Doordarshan International will telecast an exit poll tomorrow on the Indian elections.

It will be a five-hour telecast commencing from 5:30 pm Bangladesh time, according to a press release of Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

The Doordarshan International will also telecast 72-hour non-stop programme on election results beginning March 2. The transmission will begin at 3 pm.

Showcasing of the general election will also be out live in Internet from February 28 at <http://www.ddindia.net>, the release added.