

Ershad jail

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medately. "If the Government wants the approval of the House to the Ershad issue, we all support the cause of his removal to a jail proper." Sheikh Hasina said.

Jatiya Party member Fazel Rabbi, who took the floor beforehand said the demand for shifting former President Ershad is fraught with danger.

The Government will be fully responsible for any consequence resulting from transferring the former President to a jail proper under the prevailing uneasy situation there, he added.

But the JP member's observation drew strong protest from both Treasury and Opposition Benches. Rabbi's voice was deafened by the strongest protests from the majority members.

The Ershad issue dominated the proceedings of the House in its afternoon sitting chaired by Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, when the Sangsad debated the jail situation.

The Prime Minister made a statement at one stage of the debate asking for consensus of the House on the transfer of the former President to a jail proper.

The Leader of the Opposition said she did not understand why the ruling party needed such a consensus. The Government has enough powers to transfer Ershad to the jail, she added while reminding the Leader of the House about her (Khaleda Zia's) demand prior to the election for shifting the former President to the central jail.

Sheikh Hasina hastened to add, "If you need our support to take Ershad to the central jail, we demand that he should be removed to the central jail within the next 12 hours."

At this stage, Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badroddoza Chowdhury rose on a point of clarification and referred to Sheikh Hasina's interview published in the Time Magazine in its December 24 issue. She said in that interview that there was no need to take Ershad to the central jail, he said.

The Leader of the Opposition strongly denied having made any such comment. "It is an utter lie," she said. Later Leader of the House Khaleda Zia said she sought the opinion of the House on the issue of transferring Ershad to the central jail only for greater understanding among the members. She announced that Ershad would be transferred to the central jail as soon as the official formalities were complete.

US warns Iraq

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who advanced as far south as the oil city of Kirkuk 60 km (36 miles) south of the 39th Parallel before Baghdad's heavier firepower forced them back.

The senior US official said the new warning applied to all Iraqi aircraft, including helicopters, and was designed to ensure that Iraq did not interfere in relief efforts to help hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees who have fled the fighting.

US F-16 and F-15 fighters have been escorting British, French and American transport aircraft dropping aid to the Kurds camped near the Turkish frontier.

Several hundred Kurds marched to the US embassy in Kuwait today to demand the resumption of Operation Desert Storm and help to overthrow Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

The demonstrators, waving US flags and pictures of President George Bush, had banners. One read: "Continue Desert Storm till liberation of Kurdistan."

"No comment," said a US soldier who took part in the Gulf war, condemned Desert Storm by the US-led Allies, and who now guards the compound.

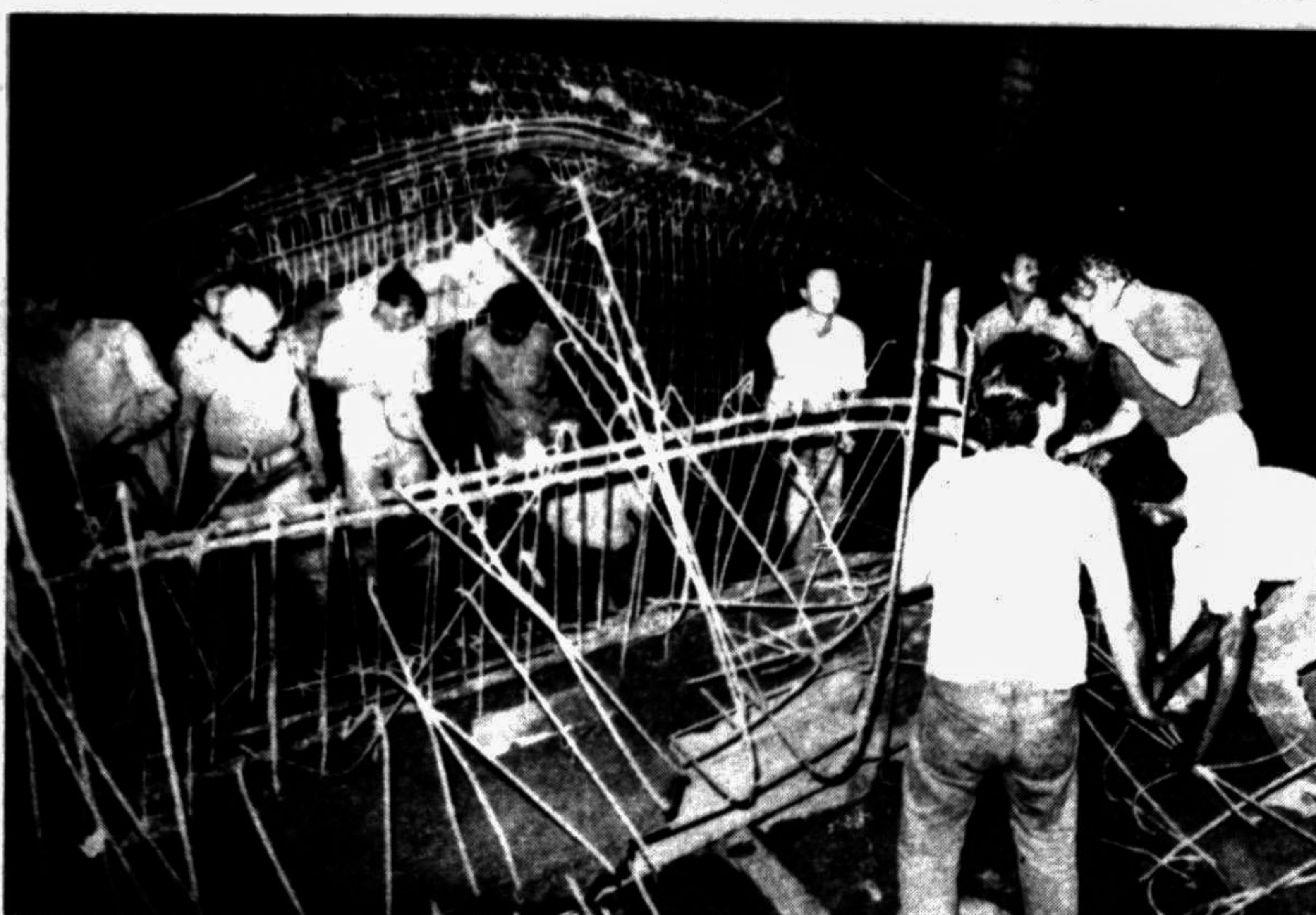
A spokesman for the group said Kurds were let down by the Allies.

"We know Desert Storm can do anything. Saddam is a criminal of war and Bush said he is going to put him on trial. Where is that promise now?" said Ali Adha.

Netherlands envoy calls on Speaker

Hehricus Gajentan, the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh called on Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas at his office at Sangsad Bhaban Wednesday evening, reports BSS.

They discussed parliamentary issues and other matters of mutual interest.



Local people and rescuers are searching for victims of Wednesday's nor'wester in which the roof of an under-construction building of a textile mills at Gilarchala in Sreepur upazila collapsed. — Star photo

100 feared killed

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The Fire Service employees were being assisted by the foreign experts of the Titas Gas company. The bodies were being rescued by cutting the heavy rods with oxy-acetylene torch by the foreign experts of Titas Gas.

Hundreds of people were crammed the spot till late at night.

6 killed in Habiganj

Storm lashed Habiganj Wednesday afternoon killing at least six and rendering some 100 families homeless, officials said.

Six people died in Mirpur union of Bahubal upazila and at Rangerganj village and Sayestaganj union in Sadar upazila.

A child was killed, over 50 injured and hundreds of houses destroyed when nor'wester lashed 13 upazilas of Kishoreganj district.

The nor'wester uprooted trees, damaged crops and snapped power lines in the district, our correspondent

India regrets

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The minister read out a letter from Indian High Commission sent to Bangladesh Foreign Ministry. In the letter the High Commission said that the helicopter crossed into Bangladesh territory while operating from Agartala and the pilot was forced to land in Bangladesh due to extremely inclement weather.

The letter mentioned that an Mi-8 helicopter was forced to land for circumstances beyond control and it was not possible at that stage to seek permission for the landing on Bangladesh territory.

The High Commission expressed confidence that in view of the existing cordial ties between the two countries and their defence forces, the landing of the helicopter would not be viewed in any other context other than the emergency circumstances for bad weather. There was no discussion in the House on the letter read out by the Foreign Minister.

An adjournment motion was brought at parliament on Monday by Independent member Nurul Islam Mont on the landing of an Indian helicopter recently at Sarail in Brahmanbaria. The motion was rejected by the chair, but the concerned minister was invited to make a statement on it since the incident was important.

AL notice

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The Bill has been prepared in the light of the November 19 joint declaration of the 8-Party, 7-Party and 5-Party alliances.

Earlier, it was widely believed that the Bill would be moved today, the first private members day. But according to Rules of Procedure, any member, other than minister, desiring to move for leave to introduce a bill, shall give to the Parliament Secretary 15 days written notice of his intention to do so.

Sources said the ALPP would seek leave to introduce the Bill at any private members day after the Eid-ul-Fitr vacation.

The current session is expected to be adjourned tomorrow till April 20 for Eid holidays.

reports. The nor'wester hit around 3:25 pm and lasted till 4:10 pm. The worst-hit upazilas are Kishoreganj Sadar, Karimganj, Bajitpur, Hossainpur, Tarail, Bhaibrab, Pakundia and Mitamain.

A one-year-old child was killed when a tin roof fell on him at Mesera village of Hossainpur upazila.

The nor'wester uprooted 15 poles of Kishoreganj-Bhaibrab 33 KV power line, 10 poles of Kishoreganj-Pakundia 11 KV line, and five poles of Bajitpur power line. The whole area plunged into darkness and power supply could not be restored till writing of this report.

Reports coming in from the upazilas, said the roof of Hossainpur Pilot High School was blown away in the nor'wester.

Thousands of trees have been uprooted and huge tracts of boro paddy was damaged. Kazi Nazrul Islam, DC, Kishoreganj when contacted said he could not gather reports of damage as yet. He also could not confirm any death.

Chittagong city and its adjoining areas were hit by a nor'wester Wednesday night with a maximum speed of 96 KM per hour. Met Office sources in Chittagong said.

Cox's Bazar and coastal areas were also battered by the nor'wester. Some fishing boats were in the Bay during the storm, but no report of any casualty or damage has been received so far.

It also hit Khulna disrupting power supply in the town. DC, Khulna however, could not give details of damage or injury.

Shifting

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Accordingly, a meeting of the concerned officials and the 'kitchen cabinet' of Begum Zia was held last night at the residence of the Prime Minister. The meeting was continuing till submitting of this report at 11.15 pm.

Government sources said a special cell has been readied at the Dhaka Central Jail for Ershad.

Deposed President Ershad, who is now facing trial for possessing illegal arms has been detained at a Gulshan villa since December 12. He has been staying there along with his detained wife Raushan Ershad, their son Saad and adopted daughter Jabena.

The jail authorities declared the Gulshan house as a sub-jail. The government is now working on the formalities for moving Ershad to the central jail.

The official sources said Begum Raushan Ershad, their son Saad and adopted daughter will stay at the Gulshan sub-jail. When contacted, JG (Prison) told The Daily Star that he had not been given any intimation as yet.

Seen from the gallery

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ties of words with neither showing any respect to Churchill's words of wisdom. At times their tones and decisions only helped discomfit the Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali.

The Leader of the Opposition, in a flagrant disregard to parliamentary etiquette, left the House without listening to Begum Khaleda Zia's rebuttal on the Central Jail incident.

Sheikh Hasina apparently did it in retaliation to Khaleda Zia's request to the Speaker to give the floor to Mia Mansur after the Leader of the Opposition spoke.

Suranjit Sengupta regretted that the parliamentary niceties had been flouted in the House.

He said that parliamentary debate had turned into a 'bahas' heated exchanges.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and her party seem to have reversed their pre-election stand on the repeal of the Special Powers Act, the shifting of Ershad the Central Jail and relations with India.

Sheikh Hasina's demand for the repeal of the Special Powers Act and the shifting of Ershad to jail within 12 hours reflected the change in post-election Awami League policy.

Sheikh Hasina had termed the Special Powers Act as a white law asserting that a law which confines Ershad cannot be black.

She had also said before the election that "No matter where Ershad stays, he should be tried".

"We were also kept under house arrest by Ershad" she had said without pressing for sending Ershad to jail.

On Wednesday she and her party members were pressuring the Prime Minister who is in charge of the Home Ministry to send Ershad to jail in 12 hours time and also to repeal the Special Powers Act.

Two leaders had heated exchanges over

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Metropolitan Magistrate A.K.M. Ismail.

Seven prosecution witnesses have been grilled so far with one more yet to come. The accused Ershad was put in the dock at around 10:30 am looking a little fresher than he did the previous day.

In his statement before the Tribunal witness Fakhr Saleh Mohammad said that all the arms recovered from the Sena Bhaban were lethal and that the bullets found there were also more powerful than the 0.22 calibre bullets.

According to the 1974 Arms Act, the President is not allowed to keep arms above the 0.22 calibre without licence.

The cross-examination of the ballistics expert was held in the morning and could not be covered because of the token-strike observed by journalists from 11 am to 1 pm Wednesday.

The cross-examination of the Metropolitan Magistrate A.K.M. Ismail was held in the afternoon.

The Metropolitan Magistrate in his statements before the Tribunal corroborated those made by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Azizul Haque Bhuiyan.

He stressed that Ershad's brother-in-law Mustafizur Rahman had deposited the arms before the deadline set by the government for the surrendering of illegal arms expired on December 26.

Following are excerpts of the cross-examination: DL: Did you identify the articles of Bangabhaban? MM: I did not do so. DL: Who identified the articles?

MM: Representatives of different departments identified their respective articles. DL: You were with them? MM: Yes. DL: Did they come with a list?

MM: Yes. They identified their items with the help of the list. DL: Was there any level against all the items recovered from the Bangabhaban? MM: There were levels of Bangabhaban against all the crockery and utensils but not against all the items.

DL: Did you see any register there? MM: No, I did not see any register. DL: Did you see any documents or register of the items not belonging to the government? MM: No, I did not see any such register.

DL: Did you find any separate register of arms? MM: No, I did not find any register of arms. DL: Was there any register of other articles? MM: There was no register. Representatives of respective departments brought their own lists of items supplied to the Bangabhaban.

DL: Did you discuss at all on the point, who of who owns the unlicensed arms? MM: There was no such meeting. DL: Did you sign the report which you sent to the government? MM: I did not sign. DL: You sought two kinds of directives from the higher authority. Was there any directive from the higher authority? MM: There was no directive from the higher authority. DL: When you sought directive from the higher authority, you would not know who was the owner of these arms. And you also were not confirmed

Press Galleries vacant for three hours

By Staff Correspondent

The two press galleries at the Sangsad Bhaban remained vacant during the morning session of the House Wednesday since the reporters did not cover the proceedings of the session in response to a three-hour strike call of the Dhaka Union of Journalist (DUJ). The strike was observed from 10 am to 1 pm by the journalists in all the city newspapers and news agencies.

The DUJ Tuesday called the strike to press home its demand for reinstatement of the retrenched journalists of the Dainik Desh and Bangladesh Observer, an end to the harassment of journalists in the Dainik Azad, payment of all dues of the journalists of the Dainik Dinkal and the Naba Abhijan and rapid solution of the problems of the Bangladesh Times.

The journalists of the Dainik Dinkal Wednesday observed a sit in strike in front of the residence of owner-cum-editor of the paper from Wednesday morning, and they withdrew the strike in the afternoon after getting an assurance from the owner of republication of the paper and payment of all dues.

The Midnight File

700 rebels killed in Lanka

COLOMBO, Apr 10 : Hundreds of Tamil rebels and government soldiers have been killed over the past two weeks in renewed fighting in Sri Lanka's north and east, a Defence Ministry official said today. The Defence Ministry Secretary, General Cyril Ranatunga, said up to 700 rebels and 111 members of the security forces had been killed northwest Mannar district and northern Karainagar, the two main battle zones, since a new phase of fighting erupted in mid-February, reports Reuter.

Youths battle police in Lome

LOME, Apr 10 : Thousands of students and young people battled police in Togo's capital Lome today in a second successive day of anti-government protests, witnesses said. Police fired warning shots and used teargas as protesters in a working-class district burned tyres and shouted slogans demanding the resignation of President Gnassingbe Eyadema, reports Reuter.

Strike against communist system

MINSK, Apr 10 : Tens of thousands of workers Wednesday defied an appeal from President Mikhail S. Gorbachev for a moratorium on protests and went on strike in the Byelorussian capital. The Communist Party Drove Us Here, read one placard held by workers marching to Minsk's central Lenin Square. "Put Food from Chernobyl on the Government Table," read another sign, reports AP.

Islamic code for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Apr 10 : Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced today his government had decided to make the Islamic Code of Sharia "supreme law" for Pakistan, reports Reuter.

Political vengeance

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that those belonged to Ershad? MM: We sought directive from the higher authorities for the disposal of the arms.

Judge: You sought directive for disposal but not for identification. MM: We wanted to know what to do with the recovered articles.

DL: You could not ascertain the ownership of the articles. So you sought guidelines from the higher authority? MM: Not for identification but for what should be done with the items.

DL: Did you mention 'personal' in the inventory list? MM: No I did not. But the arms which were unlicensed were mentioned as 'without licence'.

DL: Has Ershad ever said it? MM: No, he has not. DL: Did you say that those arms belonged to Ershad in your statement made before the police on January 20?

MM: It was mentioned in the computerised report submitted to the police. DL: You did not tell it to the police.

MM: I did not. DL: Mustafizur Rahman deposited a box to you. Did you ask him to do so? MM: We did not ask him to deposit the box. He brought it on his own.

At this stage the Attorney General prompted that the box brought on his own. Defense Lawyer Sirajul Haque took offence and said it should be written that the answer was prompted by the Attorney General.

The Judge then humorously said, "His sensations are out of his control". DL: Do you know that the government had declared if any one deposits arms before December 26 he will be exempted from punishment?

MM: Yes. The announcement was made by Home Secretary. DL: Do you know that the Home Secretary is part of the government?

MM: Yes. DL: Four arms of the box are the subject matter of this case. MM: There are more arms other than those recovered from the box.

DL: Do you know that the President and other members of the Parliament can keep arms without license in whatever numbers they wish? MM: I don't know. DL: He can deposit the arms after six month of his stepping down from the post.

MM: I don't know. DL: Do you know that my client wrote four letters to the Home Ministry and three letters to the Acting President between December 15 and December 26 requesting them to allow his wife to remain present during the identification of the articles.

MM: I don't know. I have seen a letter authorising Mustafizur Rahman as the representative of the ex-President. DL: What was written in the letter. He was only authorised to receive articles. DL: (Giving a suggestion) Mustafizur Rahman was authorised to receive articles but not for identification. DL: What is B.V.? MM: It means Bangabhaban. DL: Who owns Taka 10 lakh? MM: We sought an opinion from the authority about the money. DL: Did you follow any procedure in making the list of items? MM: We did not take any

DL: My client said that as a former President he got many gifts.

MM: I don't know that. DL: This is a case of political vengeance.

MM: This is not true. After finishing the cross-examination Defence Lawyer Sirajul Haque shook hands with the Metropolitan Magistrate and the Metropolitan Magistrate also shook hands with Ershad who was sitting in the dock.

The tribunal will resume on April 21.

Dhaka, Thimpu

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Bangladesh counterpart ASM Mustafizur Rahman at the Sangsad Bhaban Wednesday afternoon.

During the discussions, the Bhutanese Minister said King Jigme Singe Wangchuk has personally sent him to convey greetings to the new government headed by Begum Khaleda Zia, a Foreign Ministry official told newsmen.

Tsering, at the meeting, paid glowing tributes to late President Ziaur Rahman and said the "excellent rapport" between Dhaka and Thimpu was the result of the personal initiative of the late leader, the official added.

The official quoted Bhutanese Minister as saying "Ziaur Rahman was the vision of friendship between the two countries".

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