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Mujahideen take over Kabul

KABUL, Apr 25: Thousands of Mujahideen guerrillas took over Kabul today and carved it up into rival power centers, as the Soviet-installed Afghan regime gave up without firing a shot, reports AFP.

Wild celebrations with Mujahideen shooting non-stop volleys of tracer bullets and BM-20 rockets into the air erupted Saturday night after the peaceful takeover of Afghanistan's biggest prize.

It is like the fourth of July said one awed foreigner as bullets streaked into the sky leaving a trail of orange, blue and yellow.

The fall of the city of 1.5

million people to the Mujahideen ended 14 years of bitter war between the communist government here and guerrillas waging a bloody "Jihad" (holy war) to overthrow it.

There was no word on the whereabouts of the fate of ousted President Najibullah, who nine days before tried to flee the capital but was stopped by troops at the airport and then stripped of his powers by members of his own regime.

Najibullah had been at a UN compound since then.

But questions whether peace was finally near re-

mained amid sporadic fighting Saturday between guerrillas owing allegiance to commander Ahmed Shah Masood and his bitter Mujahideen rival, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the radical fundamentalist Hezb-i-Islami party.

In Peshawar, Pakistan, where the guerrillas are based, a top Jamiat official said that Masood had been ordered to take control of Kabul by the new head of the Afghan interim council, Sibgatullah Mojaddedi.

The 50-member council to take power in Kabul had been agreed upon Friday by the rebel political parties.



Flanked by Afghan army soldiers, a Mujahid loyal to Hekmatyar sits atop an armoured vehicle with other Mujahideen fighters in front of the Presidential Palace in Kabul. Jamiat-i-Islami forces, though, have entered the palace with the rival factions at a stand off. — AFP photo

Rao wants to hold talks with Khaleda

NEW DELHI, Apr 25: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao said here today that he was looking forward to welcoming Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the Indian capital and discuss all bilateral issues with a view to finding their solutions, reports BSS Chief Editor Devapriya Barua.

Sounding optimistic he said "Statesmanship lies in solving all problems with neighbours". He described relationship with Bangladesh as "very good" and expressed the hope that the relationship would be further strengthened in the coming days.

The Indian Prime Minister was talking to a group of Bangladeshi Editors, now on a visit here this morning at his official residence.

During the discussion lasting about 40 minutes Rao replied to a number of questions on economic liberalisation, foreign policy reorientation in the context of global changes following collapse of the Soviet Union and his party's performance as a minority government.

He told the Editors that in the economic sphere his gov-

ernment was committed to the same. He said that the Bangladesh Working Group sat informally yesterday but did not make headway in its effort to work out the modalities for refugee repatriation, sources said.

Senior officials of the two countries debated over the United Nations involvement in the process.

Dhaka officials proposed that the UNHCR be given the monitor's role while Yangon officials insisted that the task be done bilaterally.

Additional Foreign Secretary Feroz Sobhan and Director General of the Political Department of the Myanmar Foreign Ministry Aye led the respective sides at the informal session of the

Dhaka-Yangon working group sits informally: No progress

By Staff Correspondent

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Diarrhoea claims 5 more lives in southern dists

By Staff Correspondent

Five more people died of and another 692 were attacked by diarrhoea in the southern districts in 24 hours ending Saturday.

Officials said with the latest deaths, the toll rose to 274 while a total of 20,165 people of Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Pirojpur, Barguna, Jhalakati, Bagherhat and Khulna districts were affected by the disease that kills by draining out body fluid.

Health Ministry control room officials said that the highest number of 209 people were affected in Barisal alone during the last 24 hours while two people died in the district.

However, they hoped that the situation would improve with the coming of rains in the region.

BNP policy deepens crisis, says Hasina

BAJITPUR (Kishoreganj), Apr 25: Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina today dubbed the BNP government "a miserable failure" in running the state affairs, saying "its autocratic policy further deepened the crisis in politico-economic life," reports UNB.

Hasina, the Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, who came here to see the tornado-hit villages of Matjhar and Dilalpur union, was addressing a public meeting at the local Dakbonglow premises this afternoon.

Presided over by Bajitpur thana Awami League leader Azizur Rahman, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by Zillur Rahman, Syed Ahmad, Iy Rahman, Abdul Hamid, MP, and ex-MP Fazlur Rahman.

The Awami League chief accused the ruling BNP of hatching conspiracy to foil the parliamentary democracy earned through a longdrawn movement.

"This unlettered government does not know the meaning of democracy or the parliamentary democracy", she said in a hard-hitting speech. "Each step of the government has aggravated the misery of commonman."

Hasina said that BNP has made lofty commitments before the election but now they have failed even to ensure minimum guarantee to food and work.

In this context, she mentioned unabated price spiral of essentials, unemployment and lawlessness in the country.

Steps to privatise Dainik Bangla, Times, Bichitra

By Staff Correspondent

Steps are underway to privatise the Bengali daily The Dainik Bangla, English daily The Bangladesh Times and the periodicals, the Weekly Bichitra and fortnightly Ananda Bichitra.

These publications are now owned by two public trusts where the Chairman and the Trustees are all appointed by the government.

Sources said, documentation restructuring these trusts and vesting the ownership and all property in one single trust will be complete in a few days.

Under the provisions, 49 per cent shares of the new trust will be offered for sale to private individuals.

Sources further said, the new trust will be formed under the style of the National Press Trust (NPT) formed during the regime of Ayub Khan in 1966.

NEWS BRIEFS

OIC Secy General due Tuesday

OIC Secretary General Hameed Al Gabid arrives in Dhaka on Tuesday to see the plight of Myanmar Rohingya Muslim refugees sheltered in Bangladesh. During his three-day official visit, Gabid is expected to call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, besides holding talks with officials and visiting the refugee camps. He will be accompanied by some officials of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, reports UNB.

Saifur returns today

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman returns home this morning from Paris after attending the 19th meeting of the Bangladesh Aid Consortium in Paris. He will brief the press at 9 am at the VIP lounge of the Zia International Airport, reports BSS.

Italian President resigns

ROME, Apr 25: President Francesco Cossiga resigned today, leaving Italy effectively leaderless and plunging the country into a deep constitutional crisis. Cossiga's move comes just 24 hours after Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti tendered his own resignation as part of the process for forming a new government after general elections on April 5 and 6, reports Reuter.

Bimal, Taslima get 'Ananda Puraskar'

CALCUTTA, Apr 25: Novelist Bimal Kar and Bangladesh's young poetess Taslima Nasrin were awarded this year's 'Ananda Puraskar', instituted by the Anandabazar Patrika, at a literary gathering this evening.

Bimal Kar was awarded the "Prafulla Kumar Smriti Ananda Puraskar" for "Upakhyannama", a collection of short stories and the poetess received the "Sures Chandra Smriti Puraskar" for "The Selected Columns of Taslima Nasrin", reports PTL.

Drought may continue

The drought like situation prevailing in the aid-region of the country is likely to continue for another few days, reports UNB.

Jute workers to place demand before PM

'Let mills foot import bills with own export earnings'

By Nurul Kabir

The Patkal Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad will officially demand today that the government allow the jute mills authorities of the country to conduct import trade with the amount of foreign currency they earn every year through exporting jute products.

According to sources, the Sangram Parishad leaders will submit an eight-point formula to the Prime Minister today with a view to, what the preamble of the text of the suggestion said, freeing the jute sector from its present crisis.

The Sangram Parishad formula strongly maintained that the jute sector earns an amount of about Taka 1400 to 1500 crores per year in foreign exchange which is being used by the import traders of the country.

The import traders of the country had been making hun-

Fate of BCI uncertain

By Inam Ahmed

Uncertainty still looms large over the fate of Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd (BCI) and its investors which has been in acute liquidity crisis.

Finance Ministry sources said the Government had asked the Bangladesh Bank to send a report to the ministry. But the report has not yet been submitted.

Sources say the liquidity crisis became evident during the month of Ramzan as different branches in Dhaka and elsewhere failed to honour the claims of depositors.

The crisis went deeper prior to the Eid and the BCI sought help from the nationalised banks. One of the banks refused BCI's prayer for "call loan" citing poor financial condition.

Finance Ministry sources say Bangladesh Bank will take actions if the crisis prevails. On the other hand, Bangladesh Bank officials deny any such responsibility.

According to the rules and regulations of the non-banking financial institutions, government holds five per cent of the equity shares of the company and also appoints a director in the board of directors of the company.

However, Finance Ministry sources said government did not have any such involvements.

A senior Bangladesh Bank official said the central bank is "inadequately equipped" to take any action if the company goes bankrupt.



A large crowd of returnees from Iraq and Kuwait waiting in front of 'Srama Bhaban' to collect compensation claim forms yesterday. — Star photo

Press Note 'Allegations of repression on minorities baseless'

The Ministry of Home Affairs in a Press Note, issued last night, termed the statements made by some speakers on alleged communal discrimination at the biennial national conference of Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christians Oikya Parishad as reported in different national dailies on April 24, totally baseless and motivated, reports BSS.

The Press Note said the people of the country firmly believed in communal harmony. Members of all communities including the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists

Businessman shot dead

By Staff Correspondent

A young businessman was gunned down in the Suhrawardy Hospital premises at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city at around noon Saturday.

The victim, Kazi Mohammad Jauf (26), was a contractor. He was also a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A). He was the Vice President of the city unit and the President of the Tejgaon unit of the organization.

Jauf was enlisted with the Suhrawardy Hospital and was in the room of the administrative officer of the hospital immediately before the incident.

Witnessed said, a bearded man requested Jauf to come

Peruvian aircraft downs US Air Force plane

LIMA (Peru), Apr 25: An American airman was missing Saturday after a Peruvian military aircraft strafed an unarmed US Air Force drug-surveillance plane off the coast of Peru. A Peruvian official called the strafing an accident.

Lima's main radio station, Radio Programas, quoted Peruvian air force Col Jorge Barboza as saying Saturday the US surveillance plane was 500 miles (800 kilometers) off its normal route Friday and did not respond to radio calls from the Peruvian air force.

President Fujimori apologized to President Bush for the incident, a White House spokesman said Saturday. The spokesman, Sean Walsh, said the Bush administration was "very concerned" and was trying to obtain more information.

Two other airmen were injured, said Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams in Washington. One of the injuries was described as superficial. Williams said he did not know how many were aboard.

Williams said the US plane landed safely outside the northern coastal town of Talara, near the Ecuador border.

The White House said a search had been launched for the missing airman. The incident occurred Friday at 6.01 pm local time (2301 GMT).

Walsh said the incident occurred about 60 miles (100 kilometers) off the Peruvian coast while the American plane was on a "counter-drug mission" approved by the US and Peruvian governments.

The missing crewman apparently fell through an open door of the C-130 after the plane was struck by machine-gun fire from one of two

Peruvian air force planes, Williams said.

A US embassy spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said it was still light when the incident occurred, and the plane was clearly marked.

None of the crew members has been identified.

US military officials from the Southern Command based in Panama sent a plane with emergency medical and repair equipment to Talara. US Ambassador Anthony Quainton was en route to the town, said Williams.

The C-130 is a workhorse Air Force transport plane that also can be specially outfitted for surveillance and other missions.

US officials ordered most US personnel — including about 20 Green Berets involved in training anti-narcotics police — out of Peru after Fujimori suspended his nation's constitution earlier this month. Fujimori's action, backed by the Peruvian military, drew international condemnation.

Williams said some US personnel remained in Peru to

continue "our counter-drug cooperative efforts."

Peru is the world's leading producer of coca leaf.

The embassy spokesman said about 100 Americans remained in Peru after the Green Berets left, most of them administrative staff, a military attaché group and officers on an exchange programme.

After the April 5 crackdown, Fujimori gave the Peruvian air force authority to control airstrips in the northern jungle and to force down planes suspected of running drugs.

Drizzle fails to settle City dust

By Staff Correspondent

It finally came, but the Meteorological office gadget failed to measure its quantity. The drizzle Saturday evening even failed to get the dust settled down in Dhaka and its adjoining areas.

Weathermen said that rainfall activity was continuing and light precipitation or showers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally winds may occur.