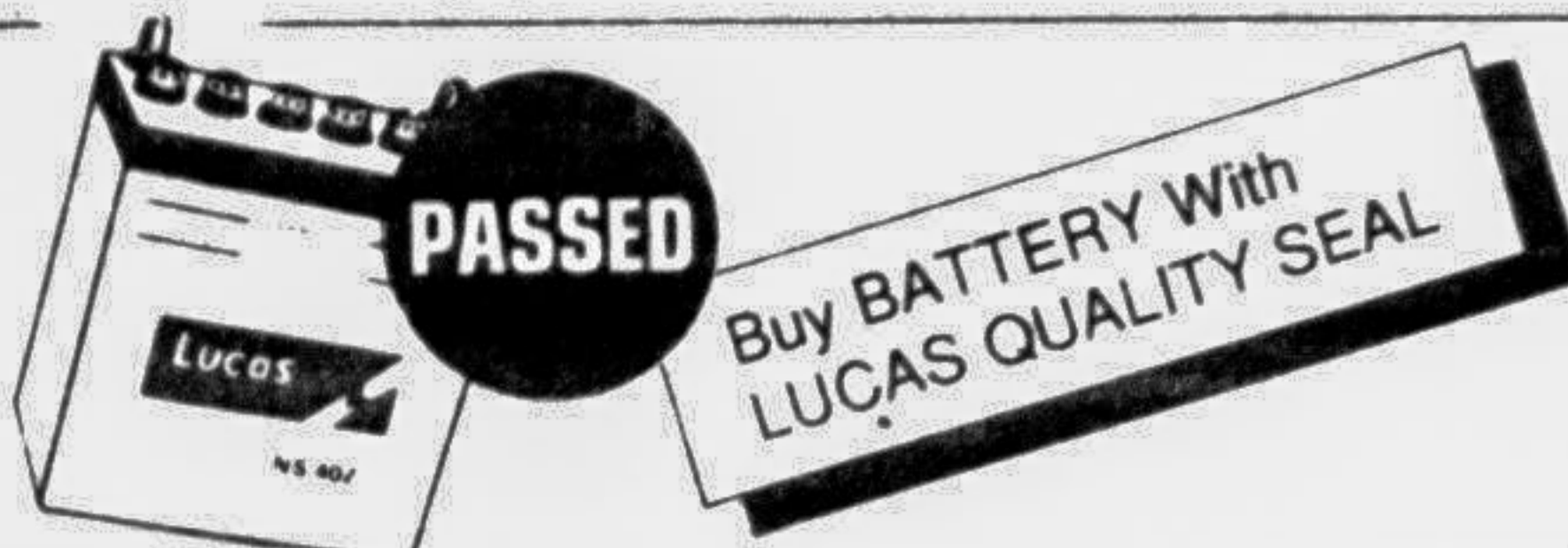


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Hundreds feared killed in 2 days of Afghan fighting

KABUL, May 13: Fierce fighting Wednesday and Thursday between rival factions of Afghanistan's crumbling Islamic government left up to 1,200 people dead or injured, reports AFP.

A spokesman of the international Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that Wednesday's tally of 576 hospital admittances could be expected "to double" today, to "between 800 and 1200."

Afghan Defence Ministry forces meanwhile launched a fresh thrust into South Kabul to rescue a besieged garrison stalled in face of stiff resistance by rebel guerrillas of a Shiite faction.

Shah Masood's forces, with reserve troops from the former pro-communist Uzbek militia of General Abdur Rashid Dostam, fought today against heavily entrenched Hezb-i-Wahdat guerrillas on the main road to South Kabul.

The ICRC official said the Red Cross-sponsored hospital in a Wahdat zone of south Kabul was hit by Defence Ministry artillery Wednesday night, resulting in 11 bed-ridden patients wounded and one killed.

"I have the impression that the hospital was deliberately being targeted," the Red Cross spokesman said. Rockets, apparently fired

by both Hezb-i-Islami and Wahdat, crashed in and around a crossroads on Dehmasang square on the southern road today, hitting a radar station on the mountain peak behind it, sending up columns of dense black smoke.

Retaliatory government bombardments, reportedly directed by Masood ally Rasool Sayyaf, rained on Wahdat strongholds, especially in the densely populated Wahdat enclave of Dasht-i-Barchi, witnesses said.

Shops in the central Kabul bazaars were shuttered and the normally crowded streets where shells and rockets had crashed indiscriminately Wednesday, were all but deserted.



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Sheikh Hasina addressing a post-hartal rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. —Star photo

SKOP shutdown

From Page 1 Col 7
 find a solution to the labour problem.

Like Tuesday and Wednesday, most workers abstained from duties in the country's industrial belts to heed the shutdown call. Long-distance private transports plied infrequently while the city and town service buses also went off the roads in the major cities and district headquarters mainly during the hartal hours.

The shutdown sponsors claimed their programme gained increased response on the concluding day and it contributed to the hartal observance, too.

The owners' provocative versions and the government's irresponsible role only helped spontaneous participation of the workers in the shutdown. SKOP spokesman Dr Wajedul Islam Khan told this correspondent.

Yesterday, too, the strikers organised demonstrations and processions in different parts of the country amid the deployment of police, BDR and Ansars in the areas.

However, no confrontation was reported between the strikers and law enforcing personnel from any part of the country.

The jute mills trade unionists informed this correspondent that the strike was observed yesterday in 62 out of the 78 operational mills in the country.

A BSS report, quoting a PID handout, said 80 per cent of the textile mills in the private sector were in operation yesterday. The report further said 12 jute mills under the BJMC also operated.

Meanwhile, the SKOP, the Patkal Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad, the Bangladesh Suta-Bastrakal Sramik Karmachari Federation, the Bastrashilpa Sramik League, the Chhinkal Sramik Federation, and the Ispat Prokoushal Corporation Workers and Employees' Federation organised a joint rally at the Jatrabari crossing in the city yesterday afternoon.

Organisers claimed more than 10,000 workers joined the rally.

Legal aspects of turning Ansars into regular force under study

LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder yesterday said that the government had constituted a sub-committee to examine and scrutinise various legal aspects and other matters to turn the Ansars into a regular force, reports BSS.

He further said a draft bill in this respect had been formulated and that a process was underway to examine the facilities to be given to Ansars. The sub-committee was now at work to review the legal complexities that stood in the way of turning Ansars into a regular force, he added.

Barrister Talukder was marking a statement in the Jatiya Sangsad on behalf of the Home Minister on a resolution of Md Mizanur Rahman Manu (AL-Dinajpur) on the private members day.

The LGRD Minister said the government would take a decision in this matter on the recommendations of the sub-committee. He expressed the hope, that the government would take a decision as early as possible on the recommendations of the sub-committee which was now examining the issues in question.

Earlier moving his resolution Mizanur Rahman Manu said since its establishment in 1948 the members of Ansar have been rendering valuable services in the maintenance of law and discipline and service of the distressed people during natural calamities.

He regretted that despite their many important social services in various spheres of national life the Ansars had no security of service. Besides, their salaries, allowances and other facilities were deplorably inadequate and low. With such meagre facilities none could live with minimum dignity, he added.

The resolution was rejected by a voice vote.

Unite for movement

From Page 1 Col 7
 manded the government to implement its agreement with the Sramik Karmachari Oitka Parishad (SKOP).

"Implement the accord immediately without any juggling", Hasina told the government.

Justifying the reasons for her support to the striking workers, she pointed out that the BNP, as a component organisation of the three political alliances during the anti-autocratic movement, had expressed its solidarity with the demands of the SKOP and had signed an agreement after the party was voted to power.

Later, it had delayed the implementation of the agreement and signed another accord with the workers and, later again, had promised to materialise the agreement, the AL chief said.

She charged the ruling party of breaching all the promises including those given to the people before the parliamentary polls.

Terming the BNP "totally incompetent to run the government", Hasina said that the BNP has now begun to blame the opposition parties for its own failures.

She resented a recent move by the government to facilitate the foreign entrepreneurs with easy bank loans saying it was a conspiracy against the country.

The Awami League presi-

dent claimed Thursday's hartal proved the people have no confidence in the ruling party.

"The people will never, let the BNP play ducks and drakes with their fundamental rights," she added.

Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman said the BNP chief was now frantically trying to cling to power.

He condemned the "subservient" foreign policy adopted by the present government and said that the people had no hopes without a due share of the Ganges water.

JSD leader Hasanul Huq Inu said that the government was trying to hoodwink the people on the issue of the labour strike.

"People will never allow any party which goes against the interests of the masses to stay in power," Inu said.

Alhaj Abdus Samad said that the activities of the Jamaat-e-Islami was against the ideals of Islam and all the Jamaat-members were misguided.

He called upon the people to resist the "atrocities of the Jamaat".

Muhammad Afzal of the Ganatantri Party condemned the "autocratic behaviour of the BNP" and termed Begum Khaleda Zia "more autocratic than Ershad."

"We will not return home without ending the autocratic rule and banning the politics of communalism," he added.

Hartal

From Page 1 Col 3
 were thin and many of the commuters had to walk long distances to reach their destinations due to lack of transports.

Some BRTC buses were, however, seen plying under police escort.

Train services were re-opened normal but Bangladesh Biman cancelled its Rajshahi and Syedpur flights and rescheduled the Jessore flight for the afternoon.

Airport sources said that most of the international flights were delayed but none was cancelled. During the hartal hours rickshaws, and autorickshaws moved about normally between Mahakhali and the Zia airport.

Life was apparently normal in the diplomatic enclaves of Baridhara and Gulshan.

Chittagong

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports: Sporadic incidents of violence marked Thursday's eight-hour hartal that left at least 50 persons injured, three of them seriously.

Police picked up 42 persons from different parts of Chittagong city during the hartal.

Among them, some will face prosecution under the Anti-Terrorism Act while the rest under the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Ordinance, a senior police official told The Daily Star.

Witnesses and police said three pedestrians including a woman and her son were seriously injured in a cocktail blast at Jamal Khan road near Cheragi Pahar after 11 am.

The injured were instantly rushed to the hospital. Immediately after the incident police, aided by members of the public, arrested a young boy on charge of throwing the cocktail.

Chittagong port officials said loading and unloading of cargo inside the jetties were normal but the delivery of goods to and from the port was hampered due to the non-plying of trucks.

Chittagong airport sources said, flights between Chittagong and Dhaka operated on schedule.

According to railway sources, train service to and from Chittagong was normal.

Khulna

The hartal was observed peacefully in Khulna, writes our correspondent.

Shops, private offices, banks, insurance companies and autonomous bodies remained closed.

However, govt and semi-govt offices were open with thin attendance.

All the mills and factories at the Khalishpur, Daulatpur and Rupsha industrial belts remained shut. But the Khulna Newsprint Mills and the shipyard functioned normally.

Loading and unloading at Mongla port was as usual, but vehicular traffic to and from Khulna were suspended.

Diethylene glycol

From Page 1 Col 8
 causing deaths of many children recently Anwar said, "no doubt it is poisonous but it is used as a raw material for industries."

He told the House that the wrong use of diethylene glycol in medicine was being looked into by the Drug Administration.

Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali suggested a meeting of the ministries concerned to ensure restricted use of this poisonous item if import of it was not banned. Because, he said, lives of children were lost by taking medicines which had this poisonous ingredient.

The Midnight File

100 Kashmiri protesters held in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, May 13: Pakistani police today detained about 100 Kashmiri protesters campaigning for the rights of people living in the Pakistan-ruled part of the disputed region, a spokesman for the activists said. He said members of a breakaway faction of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) were held at Mansehra town in North-West Frontier Province and four vehicles seized, reports Reuter.

Rafsanjani, 3 others cleared to run in presidential polls

NICOSIA, May 13: Iran's Council of Guardians approved four candidates Thursday for the June 11 presidential election, including President Hashemi Rafsanjani who seeks a second term amid growing economic distress. The other three were former Labour Minister Ahmad Tavakoli, former Parliament deputy Rajab-Ali Taheri and Abdullah Jafar-Ali Jesehi, a university chancellor, reports AP.

Ezer Weizman becomes Israel's president

JERUSALEM, May 13: Ezer Weizman, the former general who helped plan Israel's stunning victory in the 1967 Mideast war but later became a leading advocate for peace, became Israel's seventh president Thursday, reports AP.

Parliament prorogued

From Page 1 Col 5
 should concentrate on debating issues like ways of poverty alleviation, ensuring basic rights of the people, and solving problems of both the agriculture and industrial sectors.

Reminding his fellow MPs of the fact that every sitting of Parliament costs almost Tk one million, the Deputy Leader of the House said, "A debate can be meaningful only when the members make their comments on an issue on the basis of adequate statistics and give constructive suggestions."

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League (AL) chief, criticised the government for holding such a brief session.

"The opposition has been deprived of the chance to raise in the House issues like deteriorating law and order, the government's corruption and misuse of power, politicisation of the administration and the government's failure to solve the problems of the people," Hasina said, adding that if the current session had been of a longer duration many of these issues could have been discussed.

The Leader of the Opposition also said that the ruling party was trying to undermine the importance of Parliament by holding such a short session.

She proposed that the present session be converted into the budget session so that the opposition could have enough time to present its views on the national economy.

Badruddoza Chowdhury, refuting the allegations of the Leader of the Opposition, replied that the ruling party would allow the Parliament members the chance for a three or four-day long discussion on the country's economy before starting discussions on the budget for 1993-94 in the next session.

The budget proposals to be made by the Finance Minister can well be improved during the three-day long policy debate if we avoid rhetoric," Chowdhury observed.

The government had no reason for avoiding discussions by Parliament members on any issue affecting national interests, Chowdhury said.

Earlier, there was some tension in the House when Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party (JP) wanted the floor immediately after Hasina had finished her speech.

Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali refused to give the floor to the JP leader on the ground that

once the chair could not entertain his request since the Leader of the Opposition had spoken on behalf of all the opposition groups and parties in parliament on the issue.

At this stage, Moudud claimed that the Leader of the Opposition did not consult the JP parliamentary group before addressing the House on the issue.

The moment Moudud had finished the sentence, Mohammad Nasim, chief whip of the opposition, stood to protest Moudud's version amid boos and jeers from the AL bench. He said the whip of the JP group had been duly informed.

Both Moudud and Nasim spoke without the microphone.

The Speaker, at this point, gave the floor to Deputy Leader of the House Badruddoza Chowdhury for the winding up speech with no further demand for the floor from Moudud Ahmed.

Earlier, the House disposed of five resolutions moved by the private members, all from the Awami League.

One resolution, moved by Prof Rafiqul Islam (AL-Jessore) for providing an ambulance for the Jhikargacha thana health complex immediately was withdrawn following assurance by the Deputy Minister for Health Serajul Huq that ambulances would be provided in phases for all the thana health centres with the arrival of 300 ambulances in the near future.

The remaining four resolutions were rejected by the House.

Bipartisan call

From Page 1 Col 4
 remarks received resounding bench-thumping support from members of all parties.

"We are completely of one opinion on this issue," said treasury bench member Major (ret'd) Akhteruzaman. "We all urge the Education Minister to accept the proposal."

The Education Minister, in turn, said "I am sorry to say that the concept of the thana education committee is perhaps not very clear to them. If the TNO presides, then how can MPs be made advisors since their position would be lowered."

Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali reminded the minister that the members are seeking to become the chairmen of the committee and not advisors.

Barrister Sircar went on to explain that the thana education committee is not an administrative unit. "It is a creature of an administrative order and it is the discretion of the government to change that order," he said without conceding anything.

At this point the Deputy Leader of the House made his announcement and the Speaker sought to end the discussion.

But Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad wanted an assurance that the proposal would be accepted and implemented.

"I hoped that the unprecedented unanimity would have received more sympathetic response from the minister," he said.

Ganotantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta noted that in many countries the operation of primary education is vested with the local government. Since a local government is yet to be put in place in Bangladesh, the members of Parliament should be involved in the process, he added.

"We really expected the minister to say that he would review the proposal by respecting today's unanimity on the issue," Sengupta observed.

Jatiya Party's parliamentary

party leader Moudud Ahmed said that the minister should spell out the government's education policy as it is not clearly defined.

"Actually there is no education policy as such, there are only ad hoc guidelines," Moudud observed.

He added that the government should come up with a comprehensive education policy which ensures the participation of the people and their elected representatives.

Saying that he is only defending what is a "directory and not a mandatory" order, Education Minister Sircar went on to list the government's initiatives in the education sector, including setting up of primary and satellite schools, tuition waiver for girl students, introduction of trade courses, setting up of a technical university in Khulna, a national university and an open university.

"After all this if a man does not see there is an education policy, then he must be sleeping," Sircar said in his retort to Moudud Ahmed.

As a personal explanation, Ahmed asserted that an education policy is yet to be formulated in the country and called for the formulation one after proper discussion in Parliament.

At this point, Workers Party member Rashed Khan Menon urged the Speaker to ask the Education Minister to give an assurance in the House that he would review the proposal favourably since the members were unanimous on the issue.

The Speaker pointed out that he cannot proceed under the rules as there was no resolution and no alternate rule despite the unanimity in the house.

"Bring a resolution, and if both sides agree to the proposal it would be binding on the government," the Speaker advised.

The Education Minister continued to stand firm and refused to heed the request of the members for an assurance to review of the proposal.

Two Indian states make jt plan to nab Veerappan

NEW DELHI, May 13: The government is forging a new action plan to arrest Veerappan, India's most-wanted bandit who carries a reward of 66,600 dollars for his capture, a minister told parliament today, reports AFP.

Minister of State for Home Rajesh Pilot said the action plan was being worked out jointly with the state governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, where the outlaw operates with impunity.

Pilot, for the sake of India's internal security, did not spell out details of his plans to arrest Veerappan, who has been eluding police since 1986 in the 6,000 square kilometres of jungle covering the two states.

He, however, said the two state governments have asked New Delhi to send federal troops into the jungles where Veerappan is engaged in felling and smuggling sandalwood.

The statement in parliament came close on the heels of Veerappan's first interview published in magazines, in which he taunted Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments and challenged the army to enter the forests to arrest him.

"They can even send the army to kill me, but even they cannot harm a single hair on my head," two Indian magazines quoted Veerappan as saying.

NAM ministers

From Page 1 Col 4
 countries will impart stimuli to the growth and expansion of the world economy as a whole and thus yield corresponding benefits to the developed countries as well," the communique said.

In order to promote South-South cooperation, the ministers stressed the need to hold "formal periodic meetings" among NAM members and other developing countries, the communique said.

The SMC, set up in 1986 but in active since its first meeting in Harare in 1988, should also hold periodic meetings to exchange information as and when appropriate, it added.

The meeting also agreed to recommend that the executive heads of regional and sub-regional groupings and institutions of the South meet in the near future to exchange experiences and explore new dimensions of cooperation.

It also called for an early convening of the joint coordinating committee of the NAM and the Group of 77, a loose grouping of developing countries.

Another proposed meeting was of NAM's Ministers of Food and Agriculture as well as those of developing countries to address critical food situations, such as those in drought-hit African countries.

The committee also recommended various ad-hoc expert groups to help tackle specific problems of the developing nations, including food security and "the crippling crisis of indebtedness."

Two killed by lightning

CHANDPUR, May 13: Two fishermen were killed and another was injured when they were struck by lightning in the Dakatia river near Chandpur Bara Station today. The dead were identified as Matin Miah, 25, and Sirajul Bapary, 50, of village Balashia of Chandpur thana, reports UNB.

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