

94 civilians hurt in Kabul fighting

KABUL, Nov 5: At least 94 civilians were wounded in the latest round of heavy fighting in Kabul between forces for and against Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, according to hospital reports today, says AFP.

In a strong infantry offensive backed by heavy artillery fire the forces of the Hezb-i-Islami and their Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat allies attacked pro-Rabbani positions in South Kabul on Friday, but without permanent territorial gains.

Pro-Rabbani troops resting at nearby Dehmazang square claimed nine enemy bodies were left behind.

The enemy captured the Russian cultural centre from US, but held it for only a very short time before we pushed them out again, one of them said.

The 94 civilian wounded were recorded in the two main down town Kabul hospitals from Friday's fighting.

Medical staff noted there would be a "large number of casualties" on the other side of the frontlines, but details were not available.

Pro-Rabbani troops, in Dehmazang said their rivals started the Friday offensive at dawn with an assault against the nearby eastern district of Babar Gardens on the other side of the Kabul river.

Smoke from a huge fire in the vicinity of Babar Gardens was still billowing into the sky today, reportedly from nearby buildings of the former state-owned heavy industrial estate called Jangalak, controlled by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami faction.

Skirmishing between the frontline positions of pro-Rabbani troops and Wahdat continued today in front of the Mohammadia mosque just west of Dehmazang square, where sporadic fire from small arms and recoilless rifles were heard.

Huda defends position

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Rahman and Begum Zia is his leader now.

Talking to The Daily Star last night in the spacious, well-furnished study of his Dhanmondi Road 5 residence in the presence of several political allies and party colleagues including Amanullah Aman, MP, Huda admitted his resignation followed Begum Zia's directive.

In reply to a question whether he expected further disciplinary action at the party level, Huda only said: "There is time to evaluate the whole thing."

He hoped that he would still be able to carry out any responsibility assigned him by the party.

Asked about his future plans, Huda said, "I will go back to my profession. I will also work for my human rights organisation." He, however, hastened to add that although he is no longer a minister, he would actively do BNP politics.

"The BNP is my first party. I love the BNP," Huda said.

"If there has been any mistake on my part, it is my own, not of my party, nor of my leader Begum Zia."

He said he would appeal to all to stand by the Prime Minister for the advancement of nationalist politics in the country.

Replying to a question regarding the wisdom of involving the judiciary in state affairs, as proposed on his plan, Huda said personages in the Appellate Division are independent and neutral. "If an interim government is formed with the judges, no party will dare to indulge in any unfair means in the elections."

He, however, agreed the question is open to debate and discussion.

Describing the Opposition-proposed caretaker government plan "a weaker concept and a means to rig the polls," Huda defended his idea as the strongest and most effective in ensuring impartial elections to consolidate democracy and bring about political and economic stability.

Asked if he was representing any other "vested quarters" as some of his colleagues had tried to insinuate, Huda retorted: "I am not holding anyone's brief."

Asked if his formula was a product of calculated action inspired by some donors and Opposition leaders, Huda said: "These are all lies and baseless. I don't have any contact with the donors, nor the Opposition."

About his meeting with Commonwealth envoy Sir Ninian Stephen last week Huda said he had put forward two suggestions regarding the holding of free and fair elections.

Huda said the Chief Election Commissioner should not continue in government or private jobs on completion of his term. Besides, the services of the DCs, SPs and OCs should be put under the disposal of the Election Commission so that they could work independently during election time.

BNP Chief Whip

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When requested to give his reactions to Akhtaruzzaman's statement, Chief Whip Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star over telephone that individual members might have differences of opinion on a given issue, but there were certain forums to put forward their dissenting views.

"Akhtaruzzaman never raised the issues mentioned in his public statement at any meeting of the parliamentary unit of the party," Delwar said and added that this was a clear violation of both party discipline and accepted norms of parliamentary political practice.

"Besides, such statements would not help resolve the present political crisis," the Chief Whip remarked.

Expressing surprise over the statement, the Chief Whip also told this correspondent: "It is really difficult to understand what led him to make such a controversial statement, especially when he has been unwell and under treatment in a hospital."

When asked whether the parliamentary party would take any disciplinary action, the Chief Whip said: "We should not make any comment on the issue until he gets cured."

Akhtaruzzaman was admitted to the coronary care unit of the Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka October 30 with acute chest pain.

JP meeting

From Page 1 Col 5

Bangladesh's jute mills were being closed down as per the World Bank prescription.

Referring to the present political situation in the country, Mizan urged the government to accept the opposition demand for a caretaker administration.

Presided over by Belkuchi thana JP Convenor Manzoor Matin Raju, the meeting was also addressed by Syed Haider Ali, JP district unit President, Ataur Rahman and Shahidul Islam.

Earlier on Thursday and Friday, the two factions of the party were locked in a clash causing injuries to several JP activists.

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Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. FAX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.



The Left Democratic Front (LDF) brought out a procession in the city yesterday to drum up support for their November 10 hartal call. — Star photo

Ninian still unwell

By Staff Correspondent

Sir Ninian Stephen, the Commonwealth Secretary General's envoy here to facilitate a productive dialogue between the country's conflicting political camps, continues to be unwell, sources close to his aides said yesterday.

Sir Ninian is still waiting for an official reply of the ruling party to the Opposition outline submitted to him Thursday night.

BNP sources said, the ruling party negotiators although opposed to the Opposition formula, would give an official reply after discussing the issue in detail with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

The Prime Minister too, is also said to be suffering from high fever. She is, however, expected to return to her office by tomorrow, a minister told The Daily Star.

Chubais new Russian DPM

MOSCOW, Nov 5: Russian President Boris Yeltsin today appointed leading reformist Anatoly Chubais as first Deputy Prime Minister, the Itar-Tass news agency said, reports AFP.

Chubais, a strong pro-market reformer, has been in charge of the country's privatisation programme with the rank of deputy prime minister since its start in 1992. Itar-Tass said he would relinquish that post to take over as first deputy premier.

Chubais' press spokesman, however, said he would continue to supervise the privatisation programme and would hold the same rank as the current number two man in the government, the conservative Oleg Soskovets.

His appointment came after moderate reformer Alexander Shokhin resigned on Friday from his double post as deputy prime minister and economy minister to protest the appointment of ex-communist Vladimir Panskov as new finance minister in the wake of the ruble crisis last month.

Shokhin, 42, was the fifth senior official to lose his job after the crisis in which the ruble lost 21 per cent of its international value in one day in October, though has subsequently regained most of its losses.

Angolan troops close in on UNITA HQ

LUANDA (Angola), Nov 5: Government forces were locked in a furious battle Saturday for control of the UNITA rebel stronghold in central Angola a week before the two sides were to seal a UN-brokered ceasefire, reports AP.

Hopes for peace after 19 years of civil war seemed to be slipping away as the government persisted in an offensive deep into rebel-held territory, just days after initialling the treaty with UNITA.

Taslina

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Idrisur Rahman, one of Taslima's attorneys, said his client was not guilty of the charge and deserved justice.

"The accused has not committed any offence by her statement which was published in the Statesman of Calcutta," he said.

State prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan, while bringing the charges, said Taslima by her interview and letter to the Editor that appeared in the newspaper subsequently had hurt the religious sentiments of the Muslims.

The arrangement came five months after the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court issued a warrant for her arrest upon a case filed by Motijheel police June 4.

Taslima's suggestion to revise the Holy Quran, in an interview with the Calcutta-based daily, evoked violent reaction all across the country.

After hiding for about two months, Taslima surrendered to the court on August 3 and received an ad-interim bail from the High Court. Soon afterwards she left secretly for Sweden and has since been in self-imposed exile.

Aristide wants to hold polls next month

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Nov 5: President Jean-Bertrand Aristide said Friday he would like to hold parliamentary elections next month, but US officials believe he'll have to wait until next year, reports AP.

"If the elections could happen in December, I would be happy," Aristide told about 100 legislators in the chandelied hall of the National Palace.

US officials estimate it will take months to prepare internationally supervised elections. The United States will spend more than 10 million dollar to help the United Nations organise the elections. US national security adviser Anthony Lake said Thursday. It will also help provide security.

The Haitian government has to set up an election council, as well as register voters and allow time for campaigning. Moreover, Haiti's democratic institutions have suffered under three years of military rule.

Two-thirds of the 27-seat Senate and the entire 81-seat Chamber of Deputies will be on the ballot.

The legislators were elected before Aristide was ousted in a September 1991 coup. Aristide, who returned to Haiti October 15, has 14 months remaining in his five-year term.

Parliament's Upper House voted unanimously late Friday to approve Aristide's pick for prime minister, businessman Smarck Michel. The lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, has yet to vote.

Michel, who would replace caretaker Prime Minister Robert Malval, was expected to present his policy plan to lawmakers on Saturday.

The choice of the 57-year-old Michel was seen as an effort by Aristide, a leftist priest widely popular among the poor, to reassure business leaders and the United States, which engineered the ouster of the military regime.

Aristide's appearance in the National Palace, where legislators greeted him with polite applause, contrasted with the reception he received Thursday in his first visit to Port-au-Prince's Cite Soleil slum since returning from exile. Dancing and singing supporters turned delirious when Aristide stepped off a podium to touch hands with the crowd.

Cambodia asks Thailand to extradite coup plotters

PHNOM PENH, Nov 5: Cambodian second Prime Minister Hun Sen has formally asked Thailand to extradite a convicted coup plotter to Phnom Penh, reports Reuters.

Hun Sen made the request during a meeting at the Thai embassy, according to a statement released today.

Former Interior Minister General Sin Song, who was arrested in Bangkok on Wednesday after escaping from detention in Phnom Penh two months ago, appeared in a Bangkok court on Friday to face illegal immigration charges.

The Thai court sentenced him and four Cambodian accomplices to suspended jail terms of two months.

The court made no ruling on whether the five would be allowed to remain in Thailand, deported to Cambodia or permitted to seek asylum in third countries.

Police allowed to enter CU campus

CHITTAGONG, Nov 5: The Chittagong University syndicate, held on Friday, decided to allow the members of the law enforcing agency to enter the university campus without permission to recover unauthorised arms, a university press release said, reports BSS.

The syndicate was prompted to take this decision following the attack on M Nurul Huda Musa, a student of the Public Administration Department, on October 27 and on Musharaf Hussain, also student, by students of rival group, the press release added.

A resolution adopted at the syndicate meeting said, like any other place of the country, the responsibility for maintaining peace and order on the Chittagong University campus lies with the members of the law enforcing agency and thus they can also enter the university campus without prior permission to recover unauthorised arms or when the law and order situation is created.

The syndicate meeting also called for rounding up culprits involved in attacking and injuring two students of the university. It further called for sending police force to university halls, if necessary, to ensure peaceful atmosphere on the campus.

The syndicate meeting decided to seal the doors of the Shaheed Abdur Rab Hall. It called upon student groups to end the tension on the campus through discussion.



A procession was brought out in the city yesterday in observance of the National Cooperative Day. — Star photo

JCD leader murder : 20 held in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Nov 5: Police arrested some 20 people till midnight yesterday following the killing of Enamul Haque Munna, secretary of local unit of JCD yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, a mourning procession was brought out in the town this afternoon by the district Chhatra Dal. Later a meeting was held at the Manikpeer Tilla.

The meeting was addressed by senior BNP leader Fateh Yunus Khan, district BNP vice-president Rafiqul Islam Shishu, district secretary Abul Kaher Chowdhury and Chhatra Dal leaders while convenor, district Chhatra Dal, Faisal Ahmed Chowdhury presided.

The speakers demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the killers.

A 3-day mourning programme including hoisting of black flags and processions in the educational institutions tomorrow, milad mahfil in the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal on November 7 and a gherao of the Deputy Commissioner's office on November 8 has also been planned.

Body to identify problems in medical colleges

Government has formed a committee for identification and solution of the problems of all the medical colleges in the country, reports UNB.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf has been made the Chairman of this committee.

Health Secretary Syed Shamim Ahsan and Principals of all the medical colleges are its members while Deputy Secretary (Health) Siddiqui Rahman is the member-secretary of the committee.

The committee will submit its report to the government within the next 60 days.

Taleban group takes control of Kandahar

QUETTA (Pakistan), Nov 5: Religious students have captured the southern Afghan town of Kandahar and freed a Pakistani trade caravan blocked by guerrillas, Pakistani official sources said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The 30-truck caravan, which was blocked by two guerrilla commanders on Tuesday while on its way to central Asia, reached Kandahar on Friday when the Taleban student group also took control of the town, the sources said.

The Taleban fighters had also captured Kandahar airport, the governor's house, and a military base held by Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's commander Mullah Naqib.

The sources said all the Pakistanis accompanying the convoy, including army officials and a crew from state-run Pakistan Television Corporation, had safely reached Kandahar.

All looted cargo had been recovered by the students and loaded back on the trucks, the sources said.

Four days of battles between Taleban and guerrillas had left more than 50 killed, they said quoting reports from the area.

Hundreds of Taleban had gone to the area from Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan's Baluchistan province to seek the release of the caravan, Pakistani sources said.

22 observers to monitor Lankan presidential polls

COLOMBO, Nov 5: A 22-member group of foreign observers, mainly from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, will monitor next week's presidential polls, elections commissioner Chandrananda de Silva said today, reports AFP.

The observer group, which also includes two members from the international commission of jurists, is to report to the elections commissioner on whether the conduct of the November 9 elections was free and fair.

De Silva said the foreign monitors were invited at the request of the six candidates in the presidential race. International observer groups have been a regular feature at elections in Sri Lanka since 1988.

Meanwhile, a local monitoring body, the Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE), said it will also be assisted by 32 foreign human rights activists during the election campaign and on polling day.

The MFFE said that particular attention would be paid to incidents of violence and "attempts to rouse ethnic feelings" for electoral gain.

The observers are expected to visit a large number of the 9,580 polling stations that will be opened during a nine-hour polling period. Some 10.9 million people are eligible to vote.

The Midnight File

India-Russia accord on defence cooperation

NEW DELHI, Nov 5: India and Russia have agreed on a five-year plan to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation, a report reaching here said today. The agreement was reached during the final round of negotiations the Indian Defence Secretary KA Nambiar had with the director-general of the state armaments exporting firm Ros Oruzhenye Vitor Samoilov on Friday, reports Xinhua.

Chirac may step down as party leader

PARIS, Nov 5: Mayor Jacques Chirac is expected to step down as leader of the conservative Rally for the Republic party November 12 in order to pursue his bid for the French presidency. The daily Le Monde and other French newspapers predicted on Saturday that Chirac will announce his resignation at a party congress he has called to explain his platform and rally support. The congress will not name an official candidate for the presidency. Le Monde speculated that Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, the party's secretary-general, will become acting leader, reports AP.

Nazmul Huda sacked

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stirring controversy and giving rise to speculation in the political arena.

His 'personal opinion' embarrassed his party no end but the initial Opposition reaction suggested they may accept it with minor amendments.

Barrister Huda was inducted in Begum Zia's cabinet as State Minister for Food on March 20, 1991 and was promoted to full cabinet rank on September 19 the same year, and given the important charge of the Information Ministry.

A member of Parliament from the Dohar constituency in Dhaka district, Huda is one of the Vice Chairmen of the BNP Central Committee. He is also the president of the party's Dhaka district committee.

Huda is the second minister of Begum Zia's nearly four years old cabinet forced to resign. State Minister for Establishment Nurul Huda was also dismissed last year.

According to BNP insiders, in fact, Begum Zia, who has been indisposed lately, had made up her mind to sack Huda Thursday night of after being informed about the interview with the Ittefaq which was eventually not published. She consulted some of her senior cabinet colleagues and party leaders over telephone about the matter. She also discussed the matter with party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder, the LGRD Minister.

Party insiders also said that Begum Zia needed no persuasion once the interview was published in the Inquilab Friday. At around 9:30 pm she conveyed her decision to Salam Talukder. Soon afterwards she asked Huda to submit his resignation on Saturday morning.

As usual, Huda attended his Information Ministry office at the Secretariat Saturday morning. There he prepared the resignation letter and submitted it to the Tejgaon office of the Prime Minister at around 12:30 pm.

PM's Office sources said in his brief letter Huda mentioned he was respectful of the PM's desire. He also reportedly cited some personal grounds.

The letter was immediately sent to the President through the Cabinet Secretary.

Algerian troops kill eight fundamentalists

ALGIERS, Nov 5: Algerian security forces have stormed a Muslim fundamentalist hide-out, killing eight Muslim fundamentalist guerrillas, an official statement said today, reports AFP.

Seven gunmen were shot dead when security forces stormed a villa in the Eucalyptus district of Algiers where they were holed up, the statement said. A member of the security forces was killed in the clash.

Opposition leaders

From Page 1 Col 8

Speaker of Parliament.

According to sources in the Awami League (AL), the MPs of the party are ready to resign the moment their Leader Sheikh Hasina asks them to quit.

Maulana Matur Rahman, parliamentarian party leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami, told The Daily Star last night that once the leaders of the Opposition parties and groups fix a date for submitting the resignation letters to the Speaker, the Jamaat MPs would take no time to follow them.

The Jamaat leader, however, hoped the present crisis would be resolved through the Commonwealth mediated dialogue.

UNB adds: Awami League leaders met at 29 Minto Road yesterday evening with Sheikh Hasina in the chair and discussed the latest situation prevailing in the country.

The party's future programme, including the November 9 sit-in demonstration in front of the Prime Minister's office, also came up for discussion.

Abdus Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, S.S. Halder and Suranjit Sengupta attended the meeting.

Tk 5 lakh mugged

From Page 1 Col 8

Mizan raised a hue and cry as the muggers were boarding their waiting autorickshaw.

The muggers retailed by setting off two crude bombs that caused panic in the area.

The injured driver was taken to hospital and later released after treatment.

A case has been lodged with Motijheel police. No arrests have been reported so far been in this connection.

Inner contradiction

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government to accept Huda's contention and start negotiation with the opposition parties.

NDP leader Salauddin Qader Chowdhury MP said Nazmul Huda has done the right thing at the right time. He has at least given a sense of direction to the ruling party which has demonstrated its lack of direction.

"He (Huda) deserves congratulation for at least putting forward a constructive proposal for consideration of the ruling party and the nation," Chowdhury said.

Suranjit Sengupta MP said Nazmul Huda's statement has exposed contradictions within the government on the crucial issue of neutral caretaker government.

"Huda in his statement has admitted the justification of our demand," Sengupta said, adding he has given his own modality reflecting the sentiment of the public opinion.

2 colleges closed

From Page 1 Col 3

eral hours but nobody was injured. Police rescued the principal in the evening breaking open the lock of her chamber. No one was arrested.

The activists of Chhatra League brought out a procession in the town protesting the incident.

UNB from Jhenidah adds: Shaikupa Government College was closed for seven days after a clash between supporters of two rival student groups today.

Witnesses said supporters of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Pro-Awami League Chhatra League clash on the college campus after two processions brought out by them confronted each other at about 11 am.

Campus sources said the clash occurred between the two student organisations over admission of students to the college.

The college will reopen on November 12.