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NEWS BRIEFS

BCL (B-K) council postponed

By Staff Correspondent
The central council of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) scheduled to be held on November 17-18, has been postponed indefinitely. The decision was taken in a meeting of the central committee yesterday at the central office with party president Ruhul Kuddus Babu in the chair.

8 hurt in clash at Sunamganj

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Nov 11: Armed clash over land dispute left at least eight persons injured at village Muktarpur of Dolarbaria union under Chhatrak thana of Sunamganj district yesterday. Of them, Soab Ali 35, Jamal Uddin 18, Wahab Ali 38, and Mostafa Ali 28, had been admitted to the Chhatrak thana health complex. Both the groups used lethal weapons during the clash.

70 killed in Assam road accident

NEW DELHI, Nov 11: At least 70 passengers died when an over-crowded bus skidded off the road and fell into a small lake in northeastern India today, the United News of India said. The news agency quoted officials as saying the bodies of 56 people, including 17 women and four children, had been fished out of the lake at Rajabari in the state of Assam. Five passengers swam to safety, it said, reports Reuters.

Blast kills 21 in Mozambique

MAPUTO, Mozambique, Nov 11: A land mine explosion in central Zambezia province killed 21 people and injured seven, state radio reported today. It said the blast occurred on Wednesday when a truck carrying Mozambique police and others hit the land mine near Namanyavira, an area controlled by Mozambique National Resistance rebels. The truck reportedly was carrying bazookas, machine guns, rifles and mortar rounds seized from a weapons cache in the region, according to Radio Mozambique, reports AP.

US withdraws arms ban on Bosnia unilaterally

1200 Bangladeshi troops trapped in Bihac

SARAJEVO, Nov 11: The UN protection force here is sending some 180 Dutch soldiers to the western Muslim-held Bihac enclave to reinforce 1,200 Bangladeshi soldiers, cut off by ongoing fighting and unable to call in air support, report AFP.

UNPROFOR has been unable to get supplies in to the region for at least 10 days because of ongoing fighting between Muslim-led government and Serb forces and a Serb blockade of the enclave.

The UN has not even sought to fly in supplies because of fear Serb forces, both in Bosnia

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WASHINGTON, Nov 11: The US government will stop enforcing the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims beginning tomorrow, US officials said today, reports AP.

The decision could widen a rift between Washington and its European allies on the war in the former Yugoslavia, leaving the burden of enforcing the ban to the Europeans.

Pentagon officials planned to explain the move later in the day.

Congress voted last summer to cut off all funds for enforcing the arms embargo by Nov 15, if the Bosnian Serbs did not agree to a settlement by the deadline.

Even while falling back from the most successful Muslim onslaught in the two and a half year war, the Serbs continue to reject a five-nation plan that would require them to relinquish about one-third of the territory they have captured.

At the White House, an administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity said the United States would stop diverting ships carrying arms to Bosnia or Croatia beginning at midnight Saturday.

Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said Clinton's action was consistent with the congress-

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With winter only weeks away the early morning fog is getting thicker in the city suburbs. This picture was taken near Mirpur yesterday.
— Star photo by Enamul Haq

JS goes into 17th session today

By Staff Correspondent
The fifth Jatiya Sangsad (JS) of the country goes into its 17th session this evening with the entire parliamentary Opposition still boycotting proceedings.

The Opposition, comprising 153 legislators in the 330-member House, has been boycotting Parliament sessions since March 1 last to press home its demand for holding general elections under a non-partisan caretaker government.

The boycott began with an

Opposition calls hartals today, tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent
The major opposition parties — the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — agitating for a caretaker government, have called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the capital today and country-wide tomorrow. However, rickshaws will be permitted to ply on the city streets on both days after 1 pm, an Opposition statement Wednesday said.

Meanwhile, Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday appealed to the people to observe hartal in Dhaka today and countrywide tomorrow to

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Ninian to meet PM, Hasina today

By Staff Correspondent
Commonwealth emissary Sir Ninian Stephen is expected to meet Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina separately today, according to sources.

Competent sources said there was no particular agenda but the Commonwealth talks facilitator will urge upon both leaders to come to a mutually agreeable settlement to resolve the current political deadlock over the caretaker government issue.

Sir Ninian Stephen has learnt to be rather disturbed at

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An alternative formula for caretaker govt

By Asiuzzaman
An alternative formula for an interim government by keeping the present prime minister as its chief and giving key cabinet posts to a neutral person became the topic of discussion in the political arena yesterday as a major development towards resolving the current impasse.

The portfolios of Home, Cabinet Division, Establishment and the Information Ministry would be placed under a neutral person acceptable to both camps while four ministers would be inducted from the ruling party and the Opposition parties each.

The prime minister of the interim government will only be a figurehead and her cabinet would just supervise routine functions of running the State. It would not make any decision on major national issues.

The entire administration upto to thana level would be placed under a reformed and strengthened Election Commission during period leading to elections.

The Election Commission may also be empowered to sack officials proved guilty of manipulating the elections.

Officials terminated for such offences would not be reinstated by any future government.

Political sources said the formula is a slightly modified version of the original formula placed by the ruling BNP at the Commonwealth-brokered talks.

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Awami League activists brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday evening in support of today's dawn-to-dusk hartal.
— Star photo

72-hr transport strike in 21 dists from today

FARIDPUR, Nov 11: The Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation has called for a 72-hour transport strike in 21 south and south-western districts from 6 am tomorrow to press home its 10-point demand, reports UNB.

The demands include construction of a bridge over the river Padma connecting Khulna with the capital, security of transport workers, stoppage of illegal toll collection and end of repression on transport workers.

The strike call was given at a meeting of the South and South Western Zone unit of the federation at Faridpur Bus Station this afternoon.

Rickshaws and private cars will be exempted from the strike.

Party serves notices on Huda, 2 others

The ruling party standing committee yesterday served notices to three dissident MPs, asking them to explain within three days their press statements on the caretaker government issue which went against the party line.

The 15-member policy-making body of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) also heard verbal explanations from former information minister Barrister Nazmul Huda — one of the three out of step MPs — during the meeting with committee chief Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Tejgaon office.

Huda was reportedly present at the meeting for about 45 minutes when the standing committee members asked him some questions on his controversial interview published in a Bengali newspaper last week.

Two other erring MPs — Major (Retd) Akhteruzzaman and Nurul Islam Moni — were not present before the standing committee. They were both served with the identical notices signed by party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder.

Huda, in his controversial interview published last Friday, proposed that an interim government be formed with the Chief Justice as prime minister and four Appellate Division judges as ministers, to supervise the next general elections.

Huda's proposal was almost similar to the demand of the combined opposition parties who have been boycotting Parliament sessions since March

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Dialogue should not fail: British MP

A British under secretary, Tony Baldry MP, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday as the head of a high-powered trade mission, said political parties in Bangladesh should urgently end the current impasse in the interest of economic development, reports UNB.

"The present political crisis here is a matter of concern, particularly at a time when Bangladesh stands at a crucial point of economic development and opportunities," he said talking to the press on his arrival at the Dhaka airport in the afternoon.

"The dialogue should in no way break down," added Baldry. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Conservative Party MP, however, dismissed any suggestion that he was in Bangladesh in aid of the Commonwealth Secretary General's envoy Sir Ninian Stephen.

The dialogue is a Common-

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Property worth Tk 1 cr gutted in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Nov 11: Property worth over Tk one crore was gutted in a devastating fire at Purba Bazar of Kanaighat thana headquarters early hours today.

About 30 establishments including rice godowns, stationery stores, grocery shops were burnt to ashes by the fire that reportedly originated in a laundry shop at about 3 am today.

Fire service team from Sylhet extinguished the blaze.

Sarbaharamen kill two in Magura

MAGURA, Nov 11: An armed group of the outlawed Sarbahara Party swooped on a 'Jatra' function at Badamtoli, Bazar in Jhenidah Sadar thana early today and gunned down two people — an innocent spectator and an activist of a rival outlawed party, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Wahiduzzaman, 45, a spectator, and Amanat Ali, 40, of village Noapara in Magura Sadar, an activist of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (Haq group).

Another spectator, Kajal, 18 received serious leg injury in the early morning shooting, police said.

They said about 50-60 armed activists of the outlawed Sarbahara Party raided the 'Jatra' pandal at 3 am.

Seriously injured Kajal was admitted to the Jhenidah Sadar hospital.

Police, villagers clash in N'ganj: One killed

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Nov 11: At least one person was killed and some 200 others injured in a bloody clash between police and villagers at Yusufganj under Rupganj thana, this afternoon.

Sirajul Islam, 30, hit by a bullet, died on the spot while at least 45 other injured people, mostly with shotgun wounds, were admitted to different hospitals and clinics in Dhaka and Narayanganj. The victims included women and children.

The violent clash ensued after some villagers were deterred by police from holding a meeting at the Brahmanikhal Janata High School ground around 2 in the afternoon.

The meeting, scheduled to be held today, was announced by the Yusufganj Upasahar Resistance Committee a fortnight ago.

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MQM leader, 16 others killed in Karachi gun battles

KARACHI, Nov 11: Seventeen people were killed, including a prominent political figure, in the latest wave of sniper shootings in Pakistan's troubled business capital, police said Friday, reports AP.

Karachi, a sprawling port city of at least 10 million people, has become increasingly chaotic in recent months as the security forces wage almost daily gunbattles with political opposition groups.

Mansoor Chacha, a leader of the opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), and three of his relatives, were gunned down Thursday night while travelling in their car through the city.

As news of the killing spread, numerous sniper attacks were reported through out central and eastern Karachi, strongholds of the MQM.

Police said 13 people were killed Thursday evening and four more died in attacks Friday morning. Most of the victims were killed by snipers or in drive-by shootings. Both methods of attack have become common in Karachi, where automatic weapons are readily available.

A policeman was among those killed. More than 70 officers have been gunned down in the city so far this year, many of them in recent weeks as the violence has surged.

More than 150 people have died in shootings over the past five weeks, and many fear that the violence is spiraling out of control.

The MQM, which represents Mohajirs or Muslims who migrated from India, is the dominant political force in Karachi.

However, it is split into two factions that often battle each other when they are not fighting the security forces. The MQM is bitterly opposed to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government, saying that she discriminates against the Mohajirs.

The government, meanwhile, describes the MQM as a terrorist group that uses violence to advance its political aims.

Thousands of army troops have been assisting police in Karachi for the past two years, but it has not slowed the violence. The turmoil has hampered economic growth in Pakistan's largest city and scared away many potential foreign investors.

Blasts kill 3 in Chandpur

CHANDPUR, Nov 11: Three people were killed and another was seriously injured when bombs exploded at a house at the Purnabazar refugee colony in the town today, reports UNB.

Police said Ravi Das, 35, and Mokhles, 25, of Purnabazar area died on the spot and Delwar Hossain, 25, at Sadar hospital. Seriously injured Shabin was admitted to the hospital.

The bomb exploded at the colony at around 12 noon. The explosion completely destroyed the kutchra house.

Police said they were the victims of bombs they were making at the house.

Kumaratunga likely to choose mother as PM

COLOMBO, Nov 11: The world's first woman prime minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, may be appointed to that post again by her daughter, who takes over as Sri Lanka's president Saturday, reports AP.

Senior officials in the People's Alliance said Mrs. Bandaranaike could be named prime minister, a position that Mrs. Kumaratunga is vacating after winning Wednesday's presidential election.

There was no confirmation, and the party officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mrs. Kumaratunga has pledged to abolish the executive presidency within eight months and transfer more power to the parliament and cabinet.

Mrs. Bandaranaike, 78, was elected prime minister twice, in 1960 and in 1970. After the constitution was changed in 1978, the position lost most of its authority to the presidency.

Under the present system, the president can overrule the decisions of the prime minister and parliament. The president also controls the military.

Mrs. Kumaratunga had said publicly that she would appoint her mother as a ceremonial head of state and revert to the position of prime minister once the constitutional changes are complete.

But she had never spoken about appointing Mrs. Bandaranaike as a stopgap prime minister.

Mrs. Bandaranaike entered politics after her husband, Prime Minister Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, was shot and killed by a Buddhist monk in 1959.

Her second term was marked by an insurrection of radical Sinhalese that her government suppressed.

Juba Dal activist stabbed to death in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Nov 11: A youngman was stabbed to death and 10 others injured during a pitched battle between two rival student groups at Fatullah here today.

Police said Shaiful Islam, 22, succumbed to stab injuries in the clash between the workers of Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal and Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Islam was reportedly supporter of the Jatiyatibadi Juba Dal youth front of the BNP.

Another JCD activist Mohammad Ali was admitted to the Narayanganj Sadar Hospital with bullet wound.

Witnesses said that the clash took place this morning at Nayamati of Fatullah where activists of both the organisations used sharp weapons and fire arms.

The clash ensued when BCL activists attacked a BNP local office at Shabi Bazar area of Fatullah, according to witnesses.

Minibus kills 2 minor sisters

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Nov 11: Two young sisters were killed and a dozen other people injured when a speeding minibus rammed into a shop at Gognagar on the Dhaka-Munshiganj Road this morning.

Following the accident, agitated villagers blocked the road to traffic from 8 in the morning. Communication did not resume till filing of this report at 10 pm.

Witnesses said, the sisters — Lipi, 9, and Happy, 7 — standing by the roadside, were run over by the minibus and died on the spot around 7:45

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Nepal to deploy one lakh securitymen for Nov 15 polls

KATHMANDU, Nov 11: The Nepalese government said today it will deploy 100,000 security personnel for next week's legislative elections as campaigning becomes increasingly violent, reports AP.

The border with India will also be sealed off for 24 hours until the end of polling on November 15. Home Secretary Brij Raj Pokharel said.

The action has been ordered following at least three deaths in campaigning so far and an incident in which Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala narrowly avoided serious injury when stoned by left-wing opponents at an election meeting on Wednesday