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Serbs take 160 Dutch, British peacekeepers hostage Bosnian troops blow up local HQ, flee to north

SARAJEVO, Nov 27: Serb fighters closed in on the center of a Muslim town in north-western Bosnia today, and government troops apparently blew up their local headquarters and retreated north, reports AP.

More than 160 Dutch and British UN peacekeepers were missing and presumed held hostage by Serb forces, bringing to 400 the number of UN personnel in Serb hands since NATO airstrikes last week, UN officials said.

Fear for the safety of the 24,000 peacekeepers in Bosnia is one reason that UN commanders have refused further airstrikes to halt the Serb advance on the town, one of six UN-designated "safe areas."

Reuter adds: The United States and the UN peace-keeping commander in Bosnia conceded today that Serb forces had won the battle for Bihac and that more NATO airstrikes to try to save the Muslim town would be pointless.

The Muslim-led Bosnian government agreed to a ceasefire proposed by the UN but it was not immediately clear whether it would also be observed by the Serbs.

Benazir for use of force against Serbs

LONDON, Nov 27: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto called today for military intervention to help Bosnia's Muslims and said she would discuss the matter with British leader John Major, reports Reuter.

"Pakistan is deeply concerned about the situation in Bosnia and we will be discussing this with Prime Minister Major," she said after

Bihac will not be allowed to fall," aid worker Montique Tuffelli said.

But with gun and shellfire echoing 900 metres from the town's overcrowded hospital, she added: "They know there is no way they can escape their fate."

Bosnian and Croatian Serbs have captured a third of the Bihac town safe area in north-west Bosnia during a five day offensive in pursuit of the 5th corps, which they have vowed to destroy.

US Defence Secretary William Perry admitted on NBC television that the Serbs were strong enough to overwhelm the town whenever they wanted.

As Bihac's mayor pleaded in a radio broadcast for the UN to strike with NATO warplanes, Perry added: "Even if (peacekeepers) ask for airstrikes, airstrikes cannot determine the outcome of the ground combat."

The 5th corps is estimated to have no more than 400 men left in Bihac facing some of the Bosnian Serb Army's (BSA) toughest fighting units, equipped with tanks and artillery.

UN commander Lieutenant-See Page 12 Col 2



A large number of transports got stuck in an acute traffic jam on the Dhaka-Narayanganj and Dhaka-Chittagong roads yesterday during the Opposition padajatra. — Star photo

Opposition stages padajatra

Thousands of opposition political activists marched through the streets in the capital yesterday to drum up public support to their demand for a non-party administration for holding fair elections.

"Accept the demand for a caretaker government immediately," "Quit power now were some of the slogans raised by the marchers under the banners of the three major opposition parties — the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition programmes, held separately, were part of their current agitation aimed at realising their demand.

The padajatra or marches were led by the top leaders of the three parties.

Addressing separate rallies before and after the padajatra, leaders of the parties warned that the people would compel the government to accept the Opposition demand.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina led a massive padajatra from the Jatrahari crossing at about 4.30 in the afternoon. She was flanked by her party leaders and followed by a large number of people. She walked all the way to the Jatiya Press Club via the Motijheel Commercial Area. The procession gradually grew larger as people joined it at different points.

Banners and placards were carried by different units of See Page 12 Col 4

PM's directive to dredge out silt from small rivers

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday asked authorities concerned to take steps for dredging out silt from small rivers to keep their course in right direction to stop erosion, reports UNB.

The suggestion came at the meeting of the Central Committee on Canal Digging Programme held at the International Conference Centre with the Prime Minister in the chair.

She also advised the authorities concerned to implement the canal digging programme properly and timely to accelerate development of the country.

The meeting was informed that the government had See Page 12 Col 7

Jute mills workers begin 48-hr strike

Workers of private jute mills yesterday brought out a big procession in the city in support of their six-point demand.

They also started a 48 hour work stoppage and urged the authorities to grant the government wages commission award for the private mill workers.

They are also demanding opening of the closed mills and reinstatement of retrenched workers.

By Staff Correspondent

Protest against death of youth in police custody

A veil of mystery over the death of a young man under police custody created controversy yesterday.

Sanaullah, 21, arrested by Mirpur police around midnight Saturday, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early morning yesterday.

Sanaullah's guardians alleged that police had beaten him to death while police said he had died of a heart attack.

Police picked up Sanaullah and three others — Lutfor Deen Islam and Nasim — from near the Gabtoli Primary School around midnight Saturday on suspicion under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

See Page 12 Col 3

BNP may hold rally in city Dec 6

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is likely to hold a public meeting in the city on December 6 as part of its ongoing campaign for people's support in favour of their stand on the caretaker government issue.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia may address the rally scheduled to be held at the Fulbaria-Gulistan Square, Begum Zia will address a rally today at Shapla Chhatrar.

Three major opposition parties will also hold rallies in the city on December 6 to press the government to accept the demand for a caretaker government.

Moitry worker killed in Rajbari

RAJBARI, Nov 27: A Chhatra Moitry activist was killed and 10 others were injured in a clash at the Rajbari Government College today, reports UNB.

Police and doctors said a bullet pierced the head of Badi Amin Panna, 20, a second year student, during the fighting between the Moitry and the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) supporters. He expired at the Sadar Hospital.

Of the injured, VP of the college students' union and JCD activist Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Moitry activists Mizanur Rahman and Belal Hossain were sent to Dhaka for treatment of their severe bullet wounds.

Others injured in the clash were released after first aid.

Authorities closed the college sine die to avert further trouble.

The Left Democratic Front called dawn-to-dusk hartal tomorrow in the town in protest against the killing.

The clash ensued when the JCD and Moitry activists brought out processions on the campus at the same time chanting slogans against each other.

I stick to my stand, says Nurul Islam Moni

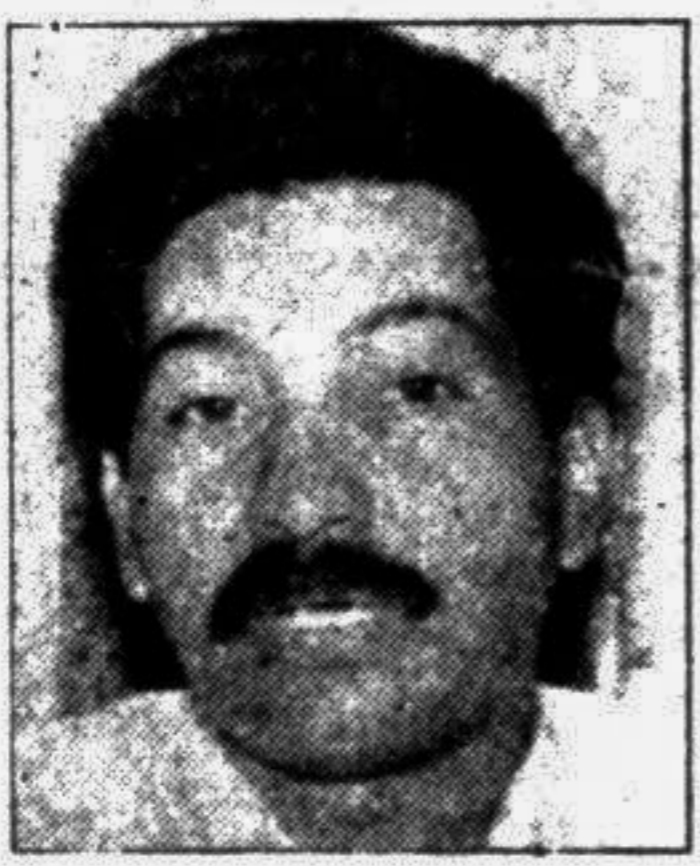
Nurul Islam Moni, MP, whose primary membership of the ruling BNP has been temporarily suspended, said yesterday he still stuck to his stand on the caretaker government issue.

"I stick to my stand. It is my failure that I could not convince the party leaders about my proposal on the caretaker government issue," Moni told The Daily Star in a telephonic interview.

He said the BNP is the main beneficiary of a caretaker government, so there is no harm in contesting election under another such government. His proposal was aimed at resolving the present political impasse, he added.

Moni felt that the ruling party would suffer most from the present crisis since the opposition parties had nothing to lose.

Moni pointed out that two other BNP MPs also made press statements, similar to his. They did not withdraw their statements but admitted



mistakes before the party standing committee, he said.

"The difference between me and them is that I did not apologise," Moni said. "I expected a fair judgement from my party high command."

Moni said he accepted the verdict of the party but at the same time hoped the standing committee decision would be See Page 12 Col 1

Lankan FM due Dec 4

Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Lakshman Qadir Gamar is expected to arrive in Dhaka on December 4 on a three-day official visit, sources in the Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

It would be the first visit by a Sri Lankan Minister after the new government took over in Colombo.

Gamar, who would be coming at the invitation of Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, will hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart.

The Sri Lankan Minister will also call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. Other ministers with whom he is expected to hold discussions to review matters of bilateral economic cooperation are Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Commerce and Information Minister Shamsul Islam and State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan.

A trade protocol and an air agreement are expected to be signed during the visit of the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister.

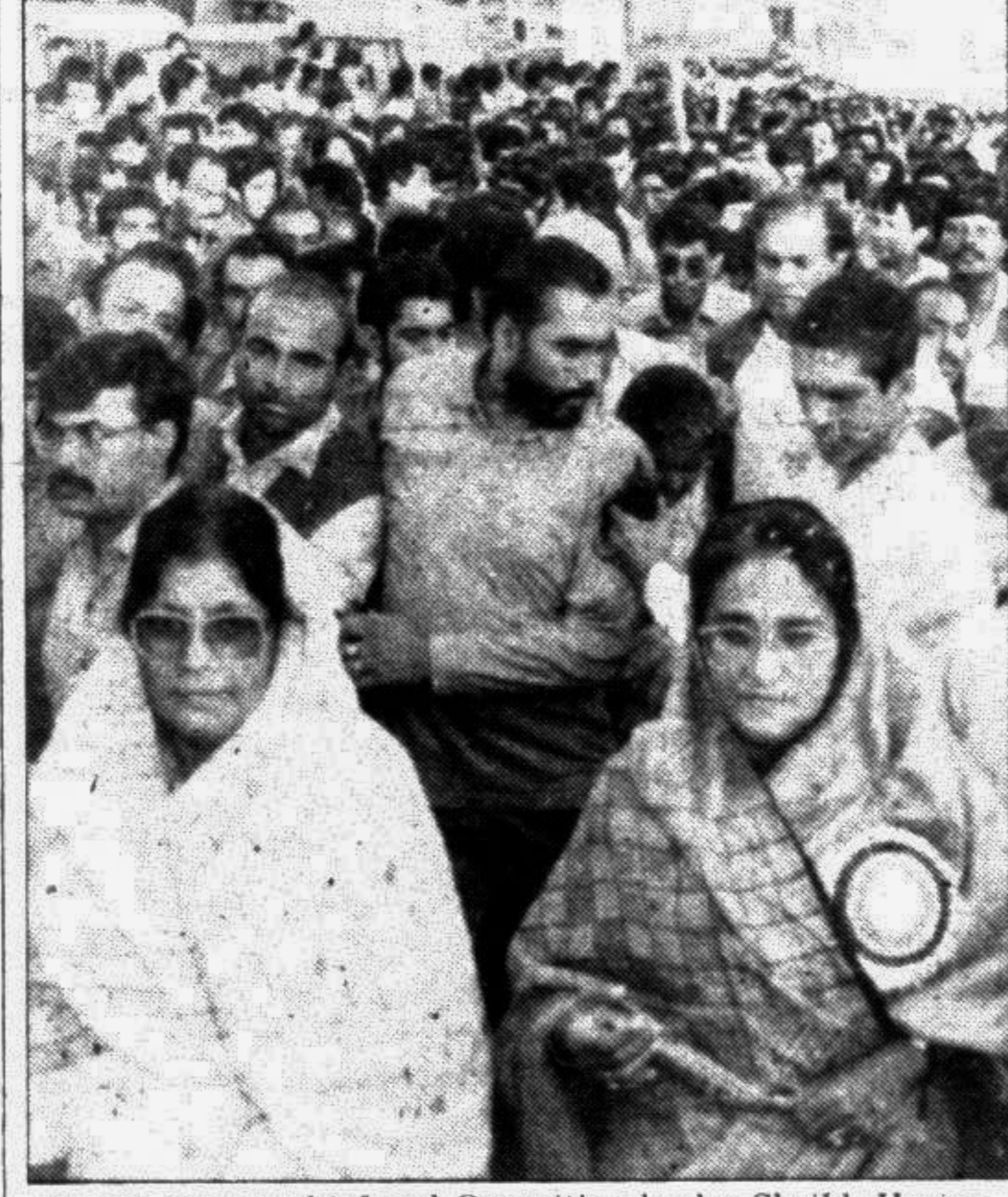
Businessman files suit challenging legality of hartal

A declaratory suit was filed yesterday against the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and 15 other political parties, praying for a decree that the hartal called for December 7-8 is illegal and without jurisdiction, reports UNB.

M A Wahab, a businessman of Patuaty, filed the suit in the 3rd Court of Sub-Judge, Dhaka, making the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, defendant No. 1 and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) as defendant No. 18.

Other defendants in the suit are: The Bangladesh Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, JSD (Rab), JSD (Inu), JAGPA, Workers Party, Freedom Party, NDA, NAP (Mozaffar), Democratic League, Ganu Forum and four others.

The plaintiff stated in his petition that he has been observing and experiencing persecution, troubles, mischief and injuries resulting from 'hartal, gherao and aborodh' called whimsically and capriciously by different political parties, specially by the Awami See Page 12 Col 7



Awami League chief and Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina along with other party leaders leading the padajatra (march) in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Hasina threatens total deadlock

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday threatened to create a total deadlock in the country by enforcing the planned 48-hour hartal on December 7 and 8 if the government did not accept the Opposition demand by then.

The two-day general strike was simultaneously called by three mainstream opposition parties including the Awami League to force the government to accept the demand for a caretaker administration to conduct the next general elections.

"No work will be allowed at the Secretariat, courts and all other government offices and communication links will be disrupted during the 48-hour hartal," the AL chief announced. "The shutdown would also be enforced at night" she said.

By Staff Correspondent

Addressing a huge gathering on the Topkhana Road following her party's padajatra or march in the city, Hasina said, "We must compel the BNP government to accept our demand."

She also expressed her party's determination to end the "autocratic" rule of the present government, and establish the people's right to vote and food.

"We will restore the people's right to rule through fair polls to be held under a non-party caretaker government," the AL leader said.

Stating that no mass agitation in the country had failed to achieve its desired goal, she expressed her confidence that "This time, too the people will triumph over the autocrats."

See Page 12 Col 8



Family members of Shaheed Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon offering prayers at the Milon Memorial in the city on the occasion of his 4th death anniversary yesterday. — Star photo

Dr Milon's death anniversary observed

The fourth death anniversary of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon was observed yesterday with a call for building a democratic order for which he sacrificed his life.

Speakers at a discussion meeting at the Milon square near the TSC of Dhaka University in the afternoon said that the dream of Dr. Shamsul Alam Khan Milon was yet to be materialised.

They also said that the present rulers were not taking steps to implement the joint declaration of the three alliances adopted during the anti-autocracy agitation in 1990.

Dr Milon, a joint secretary of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), was gunned down by hired mercenaries of Ershad at the height of the popular agitation against the autocratic regime of the soldier-turned president.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations, student bodies and professional groups observed the day in a befitting manner.

The main function of the day was held at the TSC road crossing, organised by the Shaheed Dr. Milon Sangsad.

The programme included discussion meeting, cultural function and staging of drama.

The meeting chaired by president of the sangsad Dr. M A Majed, was addressed by Advocate Shamsul Huq Chowdhury, Nirmol Sen, Amir Hossain Amu, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Abu Hena, Fazlul Huq Milon, Enamul Huq Shamim, Mahmuda Alam Kabita and Begum Selina Akhter, mother of Dr. See Page 12 Col 7

Plan to reorganise DMP

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) plans to set up three more police stations and raise a supplementary police force soon to fight against crimes in the capital.

The scheme has been taken up under a corporate plan of the DMP.

The proposed plan includes modernization of the DMP control room and fresh steps regarding movement of rickshaws and push-carts.

Under the corporate plan, an assistant commissioner — ASP ranking police officer — is to be appointed as the officer-in-charge (OC) of a police station in the Dhaka metropolitan areas. Now, a police inspector is working in the same post. Mohammadpur and Tejlgaon are to be taken as test-cases soon.

According to a highly placed police source, two inspectors, who will be working under an OC, will be responsible for patrol and detective investigation respectively.

The DMP has asked for four sub-inspectors, three assistant sub-inspectors and 25 constables for each police station under the scheme awaiting government approval.

Under the plan, three new police stations will be set up in the areas of Gohmohol, Kafrul and Rampura in addition to 15 police stations in the city.

A meeting on implementation of the corporate plan of the DMP was held at the Home Ministry on Saturday.

Chaired by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, the meeting was attended by Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister ANF Eusuf, Home Secretary Azimuddin, Finance Secretary Nasimuddin See Page 12 Col 7

NEWS BRIEFS

JCD rally in city today
By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will hold a grand rally at the Motijheel Shapla Square at 2 pm today. Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to address the rally as chief guest.

BNPPP meeting tomorrow

A meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) will be held tomorrow at 8 pm at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. The meeting will discuss the current political situation and matters of the 17th session of the fifth Parliament. Leader of the House Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will preside, reports UNB.

112643 Rohingyas go home so far

A total of 1,12,643 Rohingyas have so far returned to their homeland Myanmar from the refugee camps in southern parts of Bangladesh. This was informed at the 20th meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Textiles College reopens Dec 3

All classes of the College of Textiles Technology will resume on December 3, the hostel of the college will reopen on November 30 while the freshers' reception for the first shift will be held on December 1 at 9 am and the second batch at 3 pm, reports BSS.

Contraband seized

A special squad of the Narcotics Control Department in separate raids at different parts of the city seized contraband including 435 bottles of phensidyl syrup on Saturday, reports UNB.