

Libya to halt expulsion of Palestinians

CAIRO, Oct 16: Libya has agreed to halt the expulsion of Palestinians, but the fate of 1,000 of them stranded in a no-man's land on the border with Egypt has yet to be resolved, the Arab League said today, reports AFP.

The Arab League continues to use its good offices to settle the problem of Palestinians who have already been expelled, and been stranded since the start of October, assistant secretary general Said Kamal told AFP.

He said an agreement between Cairo and Tripoli announced here last week applied to Palestinians still living in Libya but not the stranded.

Libya has "committed itself not to carry out any further expulsion of Palestinians following the Egyptian efforts," he said. "We hope these efforts will allow the expelled Palestinians to return to Libya."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa, after meeting Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi, said Friday they had agreed to solve within two weeks the problem of the 1,000 stranded Palestinians living in tents.

But Libyan state radio denied any such accord.

Mussa said Gaddafi had also agreed to "suspend his decision to expel 30,000 Palestinians living in Libya," a process launched in September to show the Israeli-PLO autonomy accords have failed to produce a Palestinian homeland.

At least 5,000 have already left the country while a further 1,000 have been trapped in a tent camp set up by the Libyan authorities.



Awami League president Sheikh Hasina addressing a group of people at the Science Laboratory crossing in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Hasina

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Hasina said the Prime Minister was now going to America to attend the UN conference shouldering the body of Shahnewaj. "I ask world conscience with what authority she is killing the innocent people in this way?"

"By killing people one after another she has been violating human rights in this country," said Hasina demanding the trial of the killers.

The government, she said, is snatching the voting right of the people by resorting to killings during their agitation for ensuring the freedom of franchise.

"We are in agitation for a neutral caretaker government and we will take the revenge of this killing, by realising the demand for a caretaker government by establishing people's rights, to vote and food," the Awami League chief told the protesters.

Hasina reiterated that no elections would be allowed under the BNP government and called upon the people to continue the agitation to unseat the government.

Later, the Awami League activists got dispersed from the gathering in small procession while the body was taken to Dhanmondi area.

Earlier, party leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Almu and Mozaffar Hossain Palu addressed the protesters in front of the Press Club and led the procession towards the Science Lab.

Sanjay Dutt gets bail

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: India's Supreme Court today ordered Sanjay Dutt, a box-office idol who towered over the world's biggest film industry, to be released on bail after spending over a year in jail in a Bombay bombing case, reports Reuter.

The 36-year-old actor, who earned fame in a string of anti-hero roles and is said to be now suffering from a lung disease, was first arrested in April 1993. He was released on interim bail within a month but re-arrested last year under a strict-anti-terrorism law that has since lapsed.

"We allow his application for bail," a three-judge panel said in its ruling, which ordered Dutt to provide 1.5 million rupees (45,000 dollars) in bail and financial guarantees and to surrender his passport.

The judgement was a victory for one of India's best-selling film heroes whose long legal struggle and health problems have been played out on the front pages of the nation's press.

Three different courts, including the nation's High Court, had turned down seven previous bail applications.

Long-haired and wiry, Dutt was arrested after two suspects in a series of 1993 bombings in Bombay said the film star had illegally bought and assault rifle from them. The bombings killed some



260 people in Bombay, India's commercial capital.

Dutt, whose mother was a prominent Muslim film star and his father an actor turned politician, said he bought the rifle for protection during riots in Bombay which proceeded the bombings.

Ironically, Dutt wielded similar weapons in several of his violence-laced movies, produced in India's film capital Bombay, known as "Bollywood." The industry makes as many as 800 films a year, more than Hollywood or any other production centre.

Dutt was granted interim bail in May 1993 but taken into custody again and jailed in July 1994 while he awaited trial along with nearly 200 others charged with crimes in connection with the Bombay serial bombings.

Hartal: Two killed

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Maya was leading the procession when police resorted to lathicharge. Some 10 persons were injured in the melee.

A police van was came under brickbats when a tokai was picked up at Tophkhana Road where an Awami League rally was in progress at around 12:15 pm. The van, however, sped away.

Chase and counter chase between police and pickets also took place at Gulshan intersection at about 9 am. Pro-hartal and anti-hartal activists also clashed at Dholaipar at about 7 in the morning.

A fish carrying autorickshaw turned upside down hitting a woman when the pro-hartal activists chased it at Kazla under Demra police station at about 7:30 am. The woman, Sathi, 20, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

During the hartal hour, all modes of transport, excepting a good number rickshaws remained off the city streets. The movement of rickshaws increased in the evening.

Attendance in government offices, particularly in the Secretariat was very thin while business establishments, educational institutions and shopping centres remained closed.

Railway sources said, Sylhet-bound Parabat had to return to Kamalapur station. Chittagong-bound Mahanagar Prabhati had to return from Amirganj, Jagannathganj-bound Padma from Dhirasram and Mymensingh-bound Ishakhan and Balaka from Arikhola and Tongi respectively.

Pro-hartal activists created human chairs at Hasanpur, Gunabati, Feni and Comilla on Dhaka-Chittagong rail track at Joydevpur and Shreepur on Dhaka-Jamalpur track, at Manglabazar and Majigao in Sylhet and at Chuadanga and Bheramara. No train could enter or depart from Sylhet station, reports reaching here said.

Sources in Zia International Airport said, all international flights of Bangladesh Biman were delayed, while two scheduled flights of Gulf Air and Indian Air Lines did not arrive. Of the 11 domestic flights, four were cancelled.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reports: One person was killed and at least 40 were injured when a clash erupted between the activists of ruling BNP and Jatiya Party centring the 96-hour hartal.

The warring groups used firearms and lethal weapons during the fight. Abdul Mannan, 30, died on the spot, while seven others were admitted to Daulatpur Thana Health Complex.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reports: The first day of the 96-hour hartal passed off peacefully in the port city except an incident of pelting stones at the office of Tea Board at Nasirabad.

BNP sees 2 options

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the Opposition, need to reach an understanding on the composition of an interim government within a month. Otherwise, the government has to take unilateral steps as per the dictates of the Constitution," the BNP leader said.

According to the Constitution, the Election Commission (EC) has to hold by-elections for 141 vacated Opposition seats in Parliament on or before December 17 this year and has to announce the schedule for the by-elections some 24 days ahead of the polls.

If the ruling party prefers general elections after completion of its full term, the EC has to hold the polls at least 90 days before April 5 next year. Because, the present Parliament had its first meeting on April 5, 1991 and the five-year tenure of this government therefore ends, on April 5.

Bhuiyan declined to say anything on whether the government, in case of no understanding between the contending political camps, would go for by-elections or general elections.

He said that the Prime Minister was still ready to step down 30 days before the general elections. "What we need now is to decide, through discussion with the Opposition, the composition and terms of reference of the interim administration."

When asked about the fate of the move taken by the group of five intellectuals, for dialogue, Bhuiyan said that he had a discussion with the group yesterday (Monday). "I am optimistic about the move. They are to meet the Prime minister, for the second time, this evening." He told the newsmen that the intellectuals had not yet put forward any outline for an interim government.

Replying to a question, Bhuiyan said the BNP would not accept anything beyond the constitution. When asked whether his party would accept a non-partisan, neutral personality as head of an interim cabinet, he said "There could be no neutral personality as such."

Referring to Sheikh Hasina's demand for elections with a fresh voters' list, Bhuiyan said, "Preparing a fresh list needs a lot of time. But we are constitutionally obliged to hold national polls before April next year."

"There are reasons to apprehend that the AL chief wants, instead of elections in due time, a constitutional crisis."

Rejecting the Opposition allegation that the BNP people were misappropriating relief materials in the flood-hit areas, Bhuiyan said the ruling party had nothing to do with the distribution of relief goods. "The army and the civil authorities are in charge of distributing relief and the government has been providing relief goods on their demand."

BNP, AL clash in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 16: At least 15 people were injured, five seriously, in a clash between the BNP and the Awami League supporters in Shajadpur thana today, police said, reports UNB.

The clash occurred at about 1:30 pm after a BNP supporter was allegedly attacked by some pro-Awami League Motor Sramik Union (MSU) activists.

Of the injured, BNP activists Arif, Sohel, Badsha and Awami League workers Maqbul and Baten were admitted to Shajadpur Thana Health Complex.

Later, BNP workers reportedly stormed the MSU office in the afternoon and exploded at least 50 homemade bombs.

Pro-Awami League Rickshaw Sramik and Motor Sramik Unions brought out a joint procession and allegedly ransacked the Chhatra Sangsad office of Shajadpur College.

Meanwhile, the Motor Sramik Union called a half-day hartal in Shajadpur thana tomorrow protesting the attack on their office.

Serb leaders locked in power struggle

SARAJEVO, Oct 16: Bosnian Serb leaders were locked in a power struggle today as the breakaway region's parliament, angry at battlefield losses, demanded the dismissal of generals loyal to army commander General Ratko Mladic, reports Reuter.

A marathon session of parliament ending in the northwest town of Banja Luka early today accepted the resignation of figurehead Prime Minister Dusan Kozic as a political scapegoat for military defeats in northwest Bosnia.

The more significant demand for the dismissal of four generals, by deputies of the ruling Serb Democratic Party (SDS), appeared to signal the revival of a power struggle between Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic and Mladic.

On the military front, UN officials in Sarajevo said fighting appeared to have stabilised in the northwest, and expressed confidence that the ceasefire in force since Thursday was holding along the vast majority of the front line.

The call in parliament for the removal of generals Milan Gvero, Zdravko Tolimir, Djordje Djukic and Gruja Boric followed charges by Karadzic that military leaders were partly to blame for the loss of 11 towns and 4,000 sq km (1,500 sq miles) of territory in northwest Bosnia to Muslim-led government troops and their Croat allies.

Karadzic's own power in the breakaway state has been compromised since he was forced to let Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic negotiate for the Bosnian Serbs at international peace talks.

Last August, Karadzic tried to dismiss Mladic but had to back down when other generals pledged loyalty to him.

In Sarajevo, UN spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Chris Vernon said that, while fighting was continuing in the northwest, no land had been gained and overall the ceasefire was holding well.

He said the UN Bosnia commander, General Rupert Smith, was convinced the situation in the northwest was stabilising, and did not pose a threat to initial peace talks between the warring factions due to take place at the end of the month.



An Iraqi woman covers the ears of her child while her husband is shooting in the air with his Kalashnikov to celebrate the victory of Saddam Hossain in Baghdad yesterday in the referendum to confirm the president for a new mandate of seven years. — AFP/UNB photo

Menon criticises both leaders for statements

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Workers Party general secretary Rashed Khan Menon has said, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina have both shown disregard to the people's anxiety for a peaceful settlement of the political crisis by their recent statements and utterances.

In a statement yesterday, he said, people are losing confidence in the political leaders because of their satirical and sarcastic statements.

"The country will face a catastrophic situation in case of failure to resolve the present political crisis," the Workers Party leader said.

'No lobbyist engaged in US'

A high official of the Prime Minister's office yesterday denied that the government had engaged lobbyists in the United States and termed Awami League President's allegation a lie, reports UNB.

Sheikh Hasina at an extended meeting of her party's Dhaka City unit on Sunday reportedly said the government had employed lobbyists and was spending lakhs of dollars for arranging a meeting of the PM with the US president.

When attention of the official was drawn to the opposition leader's comment, he said it was completely fabricated as the government has never employed any lobbyist in the US since its takeover.

"Till today, the government has no plan to employ lobbyists because this government has a very close relation with the US government which had never been in the past," he said.

Ciller to restore coalition

ANKARA, Oct 16: Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller told reporters today she had reached an agreement in principle to restore a coalition government with former Social Democrat partners, reports Reuter.

"We have arrived at a certain agreement in principle on forming a coalition," she said after a meeting with Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal.

The left-right coalition between Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) and the Social Democrats collapsed on September 20.

A right-wing minority government formed later by Ciller lost a vote of confidence in parliament on Sunday.

US official

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Hasan Chowdhury, International Affairs Secretary of the Awami League, at the latter's residence to update himself with the political situation.

When asked, Chowdhury said "I tried to explain to him that there was no other alternative but to go for a non-partisan, neutral caretaker government."

Informed sources said that there was no schedule for Coldrin to meet Awami League chief or the Prime Minister.

Earlier at a dinner hosted by the US ambassador on Sunday Coldrin met with Special Envoy to the Prime Minister Morshed Khan, Abdus Samad Azad and Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League and Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury.

The Midnight File

Three LTTE men killed

COLOMBO, Oct 16: Security forces attacked Tamil Tiger guerillas in eastern Sri Lanka today, killing at least three rebels while losing one officer themselves, defence sources said. The army attacked separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) positions in the Chekkaladi region of coastal Batticaloa district, a defence source said, adding that 14 soldiers were wounded and one officer was killed, reports AFP.

Taliban chopper shot down: 6 killed

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: Six people were killed today when forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani shot down a helicopter operated by the Taliban Islamic militia in the western province of Herat, the state-run Radio Kabul reported, says AFP.

The broadcast monitored here said the helicopter was carrying senior Taliban officials.

The radio, controlled by Rabbani loyalists, did not specify how and in which area of Herat the helicopter was shot down.

The Taliban captured Herat on September 5.

The Afghan government Sunday said a group of pro-Rabbani Mujahideen recaptured some area in the province close to the Iranian border.

The Taliban denied the claim and Afghan sources in Iran said the weekend attack aimed at recapturing Herat was repulsed.

Meanwhile, Afghan ambassador to the United Nations, in a letter released today, charged Pakistan with funding mercenaries in violation of its sovereignty and asked the UN Security Council to intervene.

The Afghan representative, Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzi, said the mercenaries attacked the south of Kabul last week and "inflicted a heavy toll on the civilian population."

"The extremely critical situation resulting from the attack of the extensively armed Taliban group is a serious cause for concern because of its ability to place the peace and security of the region in danger," he said in the letter asking the Security Council for consideration.

The Islamic state of Afghanistan, considering the defense of Kabul as well as of the sovereignty of the state its prime responsibilities, will continue to stand solidly against the attack instigated by foreign intervention, Ghafoorzi said.

Hasina's remark

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per Article 56 (3) of the Constitution, he asserted.

Rafiq said that the statement of Sheikh Hasina showed that she had taken power at her own hand. But rule of law never allows any citizen to take law at his or her hand.

He said that by asking the government officials not to attend offices, Sheikh Hasina had violated the Article 21 of the Constitution.

Regarding the assurance given by Sheikh Hasina that the Prime Minister will be exonerated, Rafiq said that if any body commits an offence, he will be tried by competent court, tribunal or authority. Until and unless a person is convicted by a court, tribunal and authority, nobody can be said to have committed an offence.

Forex reserves

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value of Letters of Credit (LCs) opened during last fiscal year aggregated to 6.8 billion dollars showing an increase of nearly 57 per cent over those of 1993-94. On the other hand, export grew by only about 34 per cent leaving a big gap. The total export earnings of the country stood at 3.4 billion dollars last year against previous year's 2.5 billion dollars.

Mahmud said, "Although the foreign reserve position is comfortable, the present rate of increase in import spending is not sustainable. I suspect that further devaluation may be needed to restore the external balance, unless the government can pursue more effective demand management policies."

Dr Aybur Rahman Bhuiyan of the economics department of Dhaka University viewed the trend in forex reserve as a good sign as imports have picked up.

"Import is a source of raising assets and there is no set rules for forex reserve vis-a-vis import bills," he said. "We are going in the right direction."

"When imports are in the capital machinery and intermediary sectors, there is nothing to worry," he added.

Stressing the need for attracting foreign direct investment, Bhuiyan said, "Since the flow of foreign aid is declining, we have to attract FDI, which will lead to additional export earning by way of which foreign exchange reserve will increase."

Garbage cleaner

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It was also learnt that the Ministry of Youths and Sports has recently requested the Dhaka City Corporation to supply 500 spades.

Recently, a "Save Dhaka, Clean Dhaka" campaign was launched jointly by the Bangladesh Scouts, BUET, DCC, Youth Ministry and The Daily Star on September 15 with the idea of organizing cleaning campaign on Fridays. The Daily Star floated the idea. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports recently requested the DCC to supply 500 spades and some other cleaning accessories to organise a cleaning drive, it was learnt.

الحمد لله رب العالمين

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Tel : 862987, 862989, 862595 Fax : 880-2-863571, Tlx : 632583 PRIME BJ

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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