

Saudi-Yemeni forces clash along border

ADEN, Dec 11: Saudi Arabian and Yemeni forces clashed along their disputed border last week despite an accord to settle the long-standing dispute...

Several people, including soldiers from both sides, were wounded in the clashes in Al-Kharakhr, along the border between Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman, the sources said.

Parts of the long Yemeni-Saudi border have oil and gas deposits, western oil industry experts say.

President urged

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Journalist Ataus Samad, in a statement, proposed that the Election Commission should reschedule the elections, reflecting the opinions of different parties.

Civic Watch, an organisation of some conscious citizens, suggested that, in order to create an environment congenial for holding polls, both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina should form a high-powered non-partisan coordination committee to assist the President in running the administration.

Outlining a neutral supervision over the governance during the general elections, it pointed out that the Prime Minister should simultaneously dissolve the cabinet and resign according to her previous announcement.

The Prime Minister would advise the President to govern the country as per Article 48(2) of the Constitution with the assistance of the coordination committee the statement said.

The President can promulgate laws through an ordinance during this period for filling nominations.

The Civic Watch urged the political leaders to resolve the crisis before the last date of filing nominations.

Prokrichi concerned at govt move

By Staff Correspondent

The Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Committee at a meeting yesterday expressed concern over the attempt to increase the pay scale of the deputy secretaries threatening the existing harmony among the different cadres, non cadres and professionals of the national pay scale.

The meeting presided over by Engineer Akhtar Hossen also viewed that the effort to increase the scale of deputy secretaries violating the rule.

This day in 1971

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road from Mymensingh areas on way to Joydevpur. Mirzapur in Tangail district was liberated on the same day.

Allied bombing on Dhaka remained suspended for the second consecutive day while foreigners were being taken to Calcutta by three special aircraft.

In one of the bloodiest battles of the day near Gohindaganj in Gaibandha, several thousand Pakistani soldiers laid down their arms to the Mukti Bahini.

In the embattled city of Dhaka, guerilla groups continued attacks to demoralise the Pakistani soldiers who saw the war at their doorstep.

The occupation forces command in Dhaka sent SOS message to Rawalpindi seeking reinforcement by several divisions of troops and combat aircraft.

Programmes

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the country's glorious War of Independence as well as the Martyred Intellectuals Day on December 14, the Bangabandhu Society will hold a discussion on '25th Year of Independence: Expectation and Achievement' at the Engineers Institute today.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will address the meeting. Leaders of the Naval Com-

Oil-rich Saudi Arabia and impoverished Yemen reached a border accord last February following three months of military clashes and exchanges of insults and accusations.

This was followed by several rounds of talks between joint economic, political and demarcation committees to resolve the issue and normalise ties.

Links between the two Arab neighbours have been tense since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait when Yemen, then a member of the UN Security Council, voted against sanctioning the Gulf War.

Relations suffered another blow during Yemen's two-month civil war in 1994 when some Yemeni officials of the capital Sanaa in the north accused Saudi Arabia of backing a failed southern secessionist bid.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh visited Saudi Arabia in June for reconciliation talks with King Fahd aimed at restoring once-close ties. Prior to the Gulf crisis, Saudi Arabia was Yemen's main financial backer.

Karachi violence death toll 10

KARACHI, Dec 11: The death toll from violence in Karachi rose to 10 today and the city remained in the grip of a strike called by the city's main opposition group to protest at two murders, reports AFP.

Police recovered two bullet-riddled bodies from the city's two central neighbourhoods while another person died in sniper fire in the southern garden district of Pakistan's commercial capital, police said.

Seven people were killed on Sunday, the first day of the three-day strike called by the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) to protest the murders of two relatives of the party's exiled chief Altaf Hussain.

The MQM cut its original three-day protest by one day.

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The media tycoon and publisher of the Asia Times, Sondhi Limthongkul, looking at a copy of his business paper with his editor-in-chief Pansak Vinyaratn yesterday in Singapore. Sondhi said he was prepared to lose 60 million dollars on his latest venture, Asia Times, which he intends to position as Asia's answer to Western financial newspapers.

Boy kidnapped in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 11: Rashidul, a three-year old child, who had been missing since November 26, was allegedly kidnapped by his maternal uncle and aunt, reports UNB.

A case was filed, with Sadar thana today by Rashidul's mother Sufla Khatun against her brother Bablu and his wife Aleya.

Both the accused have no trace since the missing of the innocent baby, son of one Abdus Sattar, from the railway colony area.

The petitioner Sufla Khatun stated that Bablu, a rickshawpuller, was a professional blood seller.

Local people suspect that the motive behind the kidnap was to earn money by selling the blood of the baby.

Biman's Barisal flight today

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 11: Biman Bangladesh Airlines will operate its first commercial flight BG 472 between Barisal and Dhaka tomorrow at 9:45 in the morning.

Mohammad Ali, District Manager of Biman in Barisal, said last Sunday's flight was cancelled due to unavoidable reasons. Next flights will be operated every Sunday from Barisal as per schedule.

Feni land office

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visited the spot soon after the attack. A case was filed with Sadar thana.

Another report from Savar adds: Window panes of thana Election Commission Office were damaged when the hartal campaigners gheraoed the office and pelted stones at the office at about 10 in the morning.

A case was filed with the local police against five local leaders of the Awami League in this connection.

In another incident, at least seven people were injured when the pickets attacked a bus of the Bangladesh Krira Shikhya Pratishthan (BKSP) on the Kalia-kaur-Nabinagar road during the hartal period.

UNB Sirajganj Correspondent said: Jatiya Party activists set fire to a motorcycle in front of Mousumi Cinema Hall in the town at about 11 am.

Aid Club

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officials, said adding that Japanese commitment this year is likely to be at a lower level than usual.

Government officials said that delay in project preparation and processing and non-fulfilment of donors' conditionalities as the two major reasons behind such shrinkage, besides the political problems.

The delay cropped up from the current stagnation in the country's political process," a top ranking official told The Daily Star.

The government could not go ahead with a number of reform programmes conditioned by the donors, the official said on condition of anonymity. These include Jute Sector Reform Programme, privatisation of a number of textile mills, privatisation of the telecommunications sector and contracting out of WASA billing system, he added.

Earlier, the WB's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) signalled that the Bank would adjust its work programme "if, after the elections, we see signs that renewed reforms are not likely."

It doubted the commitment to reforms and said "resumption of rapid reforms after the election is by no means ensured, even if the present government wins the elections."

Dhaka exceeds targets in 3 areas: UNICEF

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has achieved considerable success this year in providing better health care, education and clean water to children below five years, a new UN report said.

The progress toward the goals set for 1995 on children and women's affairs in Bangladesh was worth mentioning, according to the UNICEF's State of World Children Report, 1996.

Preliminary findings of a UNICEF survey showed that the country exceeded its targets set for 1995 for use of oral rehydrant, enrollment of children between age six and ten into schools, and supply of safe-drinking water and better sanitation, it said.

72-hr hartal ends

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Police lobbed tear gas shells and resorted to baton charge to quell the clash.

Jubo League and BNP workers also clashed at Kuttubkhali under Demra thana at about 10 am, which left two people injured. Jatiya Party activists also clashed with police at Shanir Akhra under the same thana at around 8:45 am. At least three persons were rounded up by Demra police from the area.

A few home-made bombs were exploded at a Jamaat-Islami procession near Saudia Market at Farmgate in the city leaving at least four persons injured. One Jainal Abedin who was injured in the head there was admitted to the Ibn Sina Hospital.

Pickets damaged an autorickshaw of the Bangladesh Times newspaper at Azimpur crossing at around 10:30 am and many rickshaws elsewhere in the city.

In Mohakhali women activists of Jatiya Party clashed with the women police who went into action to quell a brawl between two police rival factions during a rally.

Train communication was disrupted for the third day yesterday. Barricades were put up at Sreepur, Dewan-ganj, Islampur Bazar and Melandah Bazar on the Dhaka-Jamalpur rail track and at Hasanpur, Kanchannagar and Patiya on the Dhaka-Chittagong line.

Inter-district road communication also remained totally disrupted. Domestic and international flights were also partially disrupted.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reported that seven persons were injured when Awami League and BNP activists clashed in the city during the hartal hours.

Chechens defy Russian military in Grozny

GROZNY, Dec 11: Thousands of Chechens defied the Russian military and staged a noisy protest today in their ruined capital, Grozny, on the first anniversary of Moscow's bloody offensive against the breakaway province, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Helicopter gunships swooped low over the crowd, drawing jeers from an otherwise good-humoured gathering that seemed content to chant anti-Russian slogans and offer Muslim prayers under the watchful gaze of interior ministry troops.

"We'll stop the Russians. They've been trying to scare us for a year and it will never work," said Leyla Babayeva, 48, shaking her fist at the clattering helicopters as others yelled the Muslim cry "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest).

Troops sealed off the city to prevent people coming in from the party rebel-held countryside. The crowd, estimated by

Reschedule election timing, Samad urges EC

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League president member Abdus Samad urged yesterday the Election Commission has to reschedule the election timing immediately.

"Shift the election date now," he urged the Chief Election Commissioner, if you don't want an exit from the Election Commission".

Addressing a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club, the AL leader said that before going to the Supreme Court regarding the formation of a caretaker administration, the government must reach a consensus with the AL chief.

The rally was also addressed by AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Amir Hussain Amu, Mozaffar Hussain Poltu, Shudangshu Shekhar Haider and Mofazzal Hussain Chowdhury Maya, Sraniik League Secretary Ahsanullah Master and Juba League Secretary Kazi Iqbal Hussain.

AL also held a rally at the Panthapath-Mirpur road crossing in the afternoon. Party leaders Abdul Mannan, Abulur Razzak and Tofael Ahmed addressed it.

Khaleda's effigy burnt in city

Awami League activists burnt an effigy of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during a rally on Mirpur Road yesterday, reports UNB.

A group of youth set fire to the four feet tall effigy near the intersection of Panthapath and Mirpur Road yesterday afternoon.

The rally presided over by Fazlur Rahman Raju, was addressed by Abdul Mannan, Tofael Ahmed, Abdur Razzaka, Suranjit Sengupta, Dr. Mohammad Selim, Habibur Rahman Habib and Enamul Huq Shamim.

Abdul Mannan told the rally that there would be no elections if government ignored the people's demand for a caretaker government to oversee the elections.

He said the BNP was trying to stage an elections with some smaller parties as was done in 1988.

Tofael Ahmed said the Opposition would not take part in the elections, the schedule of which was announced by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia through the Chief Election Commissioner, whom he (Tofael) described as her 'yes man'.

Govt employees

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within 15 days of the announcement of election schedule.

The applicants will have to clearly mention their names, addresses and voter numbers in their applications.

The persons involved in election works can also cast their votes by post. In their cases, they will have to apply to the returning officers of their respective constituencies soon after appointment to election duties.

After receiving the application, the returning officer will send a ballot paper along with necessary papers and instructions to the applicant.

After getting the ballot paper the concerned voter will have to cast his vote as per instructions and send the ballot paper back to the returning officer by post.

Malaysia

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The progress of manpower export from Bangladesh under the 'government to government contact' also came for discussion.

Mir Shawkat Ali raised the issue of pipeline-cases and a mechanism to settle the cases was evolved in the discussion.

Director General of Task Force of the Home Ministry of Malaysia Tenku Zaman, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia Mahbub Alam and Counsellor (labour) Ismail Zabiullah were present.

Earlier, at the first leg of his visit, Labour and Manpower Minister met Malaysian Human Resources Minister Dato Lim Ahelek at his office in Kuala Lumpur.

The Midnight File

Serbs threaten to bar NATO troops

Zagreb, Dec 11: Bosnian Serbs have threatened to bar NATO troops from entering a Serb-held area of northern Bosnia unless they give advance notice of their patrols, NATO said today, reports AFP.

Armed clashes at Palashi

F in Palashi with police when they tried to bring the uneasy situation under control, witnesses added.

None was arrested in this connection till last night, police said.

At Nakhhalpara Bacchu Miah, 22, was hit by a stray bullet in his right chest during the clash at about 4 pm. He was admitted at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition.

The clash between the local gangs took place reportedly for gaining control of drug business and extortion in the area, police and local sources said.

Several gunshots were fired and crackers blasted mainly at a slum near Hossain Ali High School, witnesses said adding that one of the feuding groups also set fire to three huts of the slum.

Witnesses said that local people staged demonstration in front of Tejgaon thana in

GPO functions 'partially' due to bomb attack

By Staff Correspondent

The General Post Office (GPO) in the city functioned 'partially' yesterday, said M B Zaman, the Director General Bangladesh Postal Department, following the bomb attack on Sunday the second day of the 72-hour hartal called by the Opposition.

"The normal function of the GPO was interrupted following the attack as it created a panic among the staff," he said.

The GPO came under attack by some 15 people on Sunday evening, during the second hartal day, said the gate-keeper Shahabuddin Sikder, who was on duty at that time. At least six home-made bombs were blasted in front of the gate at around 7:30 pm, by a gang of 15 persons, he elaborated.

The gangsters entered through the pocket gate of the main entrance of the GPO and blasted two more bombs inside it, witnesses said. They also hurled an explosive at a GPO mail van, damaging it partially.

A number of people were seen arriving at the GPO at around 2 pm but they had to return home without sending their mails.

However, an FIR has been registered with the Motijheel thana in that regard.

UN to settle

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in New York under the account of Bangladesh permanent mission. The authorities are working for proper distribution of the fund among the claimants.

The handout said despite commission's advice to deduct 1.5 per cent of the claim amount, the government, because of humanitarian ground, was not doing that. Rather the government is applying separately in 'B' form to get full compensation from the commission. The Labour Secretary was further told by the Compensation Commission that 11 claims under 'B' category (that deals with seriously injured or dead) will be finalised by the current month.

Compensation under 'C' form dealing with massive individual or business loss will be in April next year. Under this category the number of claims is 8,770.

The handout, however, mentioned that distribution of compensations under 'A' and 'C' are subject to availability of the fund. Since huge sums would be needed to meet the claims under these categories, it would take some more time.

It said the government has been very sincere from the very beginning to realise the compensation. All have been asked to refrain from issuing statements which might create confusions and misunderstanding.

The handout said that news items published recently in some dailies in this regard are baseless and travesty of truth. The government has never received 17.5 million US dollars in category 'A' and another 51.5 million dollars in category 'B'. Besides, the report of formation of task force in this regard is also baseless, the handout added.

Indian nurses

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tion, which pioneered the drive against 'Dil Ka Doctor'.

The union filed suit against the show on Star television's Zee channel but dropped the case last month when the producers agreed to delete several scenes showing scantily clad nurses dancing with doctors.

Despite the victory, Khurana said the union would continue to 'fight the frock'. The damage has been done since nurses are now seen in a bad light," she said.