

# Series of air strikes on Taliban bases

KABUL, May 4: Despite rekindled hopes for peace talks in Afghanistan, government jets today pounded rebel positions south of Kabul during a series of air strikes, reports AP.

Three SU-22 fighter jets dropped at least five bombs on rebel Taliban territory near the besieged capital, Kabul, said a Defence Ministry spokesman who goes only by the name of Amrullah.

Casualty and damage figures from the air strikes were not immediately available.

The jet attack was because the Taliban have brought extra troops up to the front lines and are threatening Kabul, Amrullah said.

Taliban fighters retaliated this afternoon, firing several rockets that hit a residential district in southern Kabul. Nobody was hurt in the attack, Amrullah said.

The fighting comes as an alliance of warring Afghan factions consider a plan to forge a

coalition government with President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Our leaders are going to meet and discuss the possibility of a tie-up with the Rabbani group," said an alliance spokesman Dr Talib, who like many Afghans uses only one name.

The alliance, or Supreme Coordination Council of Afghanistan, hopes to including the government's chief rival Taliban militia.

Taliban leaders, however, have refused to participate in talks with either the alliance members or Rabbani's representatives.

Taliban fighters, many of whom are former religious students, have vowed to topple Rabbani's government in Kabul and install strict Islamic rule throughout Afghanistan.

## Former Algerian minister killed

ALGIERS, May 4: Former Algerian Interior Minister Mohamed Hardi was assassinated by a suspected Islamic hit squad today at Oued Smar, southwest of Algiers, the security services announced, reports AFP.

Hardi was killed by "three armed criminals" around 3:30 pm (1430 GMT) in the carport of a state-owned firm, the security forces said, using a term normally employed to describe Islamic fundamentalist gunmen.

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## Two killed, 9 hurt in two road accidents

At least two persons including a minor boy were killed and nine others injured in road accidents in Pirojpur and Chittagong yesterday, reports UNB.

A man was killed and nine others were injured when a bus hit a tempo from behind near Togra ferry ghat on Pirojpur-Bhandaria road today.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Shahjahan, 40, a Serestard (record-keeper) of the court of Senior Assistant Judge at Pirojpur. He was going to office by a tempo.

Three of the injured — Motaleb, 45, Nur Mohammad, 50, and Ramanikanta, 52 — were admitted to Pirojpur Adhunik Hospital in critical condition.

The driver of the Bhandaria-Pirojpur bus managed to flee the spot along with the vehicle. The tempo was severely damaged in the accident.

A case has been filed with the police.

Another report adds from Chittagong: A minor boy was killed in an accident at Sara Daragahat Bazar in Sitakunda thana on Dhaka-Chittagong highway today.

Mithu, 3, was run over by a jeep while he was crossing the road with his mother who narrowly escaped the accident. The jeep fled away.

Police took the body to the police station and a case was filed with Sitakunda thana in this connection.

Meanwhile, Sitakunda police recovered the body of an unidentified man aged about 40 from a pond of Gulfra Habb Textile Mills, at Basbaria in the morning.

## Hasina

From Page 1  
a juvenile organisation, and a renowned social worker of Mymensingh, Col (ret'd) Mujibur Rahman and Col (Ret'd) Abdul Latif also joined Awami League being imbued with the ideals of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. They also met Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence.

## Errata

In a news item published in the May 4 issue of The Daily Star under the headline 'AL prepares to kick off polls campaign', it was mistakenly reported that Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina lost to Jatiya Party chairman H M Ershad with a narrow margin of 325 votes in Rangpur-6 constituency of Jatiya Sangsad in 1991 elections.

Actually, AL candidate Md Motur Rahman lost to Ershad in Rangpur-6 (Pirganj) constituency in the 1991 parliamentary elections. The inadvertent mistake is regretted.

## Pakistan

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separatists in Kashmir, a charge Islamabad has consistently denied while extending diplomatic support to the separatist cause.

On the elections in India, Benazir said she had no 'favourites', adding that whoever was elected "we will respect the decision" of the Indian electorate.

But she added that she would prefer "any man of vision" to be elected who could resolve the Kashmir issue.

"Unfortunately I do not see such a person nor such a group" emerging from the elections.

Talking about the situation in Afghanistan, Benazir confirmed an improvement in relations with the government in Kabul, which were severely strained after the burning of the Pakistani embassy by a mob in the Afghan capital in September.

She welcomed a proposal for an international ban on arms shipments to Afghanistan which was discussed at a recent meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

Benazir said Pakistan "has never sent arms into Afghanistan" and that it had "no intention" to do so in future.

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Smoke from the fire in a scientific equipment shop engulfed the surrounding buildings at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday.

## Jamaat team meets CEC

A Jamaat-e-Islami delegation led by party Ameer Prof Golam Azam met Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena at his office yesterday and discussed various aspects of the next general elections, reports UNB.

They emphasised the need for creating a terrorism-free atmosphere for holding a free and fair parliamentary polls.

The Jamaat leaders assured the CEC of all-out cooperation in holding a free, fair and neutral polls.

The five-member delegation comprised Prof Yusuf Ali, Badry Alam, Abdul Gaffar and Barrister Abdur Razzak, said an EC press release.

## 2 children roasted alive

PIROJPUR, May 4: A fire at a house at village Bharatkati in Swarupkati thana last night left two minor children of a family roasted alive and two other family members injured, reports UNB.

Family sources said, some unidentified miscreants set fire to the house at midnight when the housewife Jebunnesa along with her four children were in deep sleep.

Imam Hossain, 11, and Shilpi, 5, died on the spot while their mother Jebunnesa, 35, and brother Aslam, 6, received serious burn injuries in the fire. They were rushed to Pirojpur Adhunik Hospital.

A case was filed with the police.

## Withdrawal of conditions for visa demanded

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, May 4: Vice-President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Nurul Islam today demanded withdrawal of the conditions set by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Malaysia for visas of those countries.

The three countries have set conditions of purchase of tickets of their airlines for obtaining visas.

In a statement, Nurul Islam said that following such a pre-condition, Bangladesh passengers and expatriates were compelled to buy tickets at higher prices that caused drainage of at least Taka 180 crore a year in foreign currency.

The fares charged by the airlines of these countries are 4000 to 6000 taka higher than those charged by other airlines, he claimed.

## Govt denies

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Referring to the US State Department's decision that it would continue the import from embargoed countries if shrimp is harvested with turtle extruder device (TEDs), it said that the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has already taken measures to send certificates in DSP form with the exportable.

## CEC

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CEC said, "when I will anticipate any problem I may seek promulgation of laws. I am not complacent, I have to be prepared for the worst scenario."

About the tension mounting over the convening of public meetings by two major political parties at the same venue on June 10 in the capital, the CEC said that he expected the appropriate authorities would settle the matter.

"I have called a meeting of all district and divisional commissioners, police super and D/Gs on May 6," the CEC said adding that he would instruct them to make the people aware of the code of conduct and discuss other poll-related issues.

About the omission of the clause from the code of conduct on the use of places of worship for election campaign, the CEC pointed out that Article 74 of the Representation of the People's Order already banned the use of religion or places of worship for campaign purposes.

# Scientific equipment shop gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent

A big fire broke out at a storehouse of scientific equipment and chemical products at the city's Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

The fire gutted equipment and chemical products in the storehouse of the DU Instruments Ltd, located at the ground floor of a four-storey building at 25, Bangabandhu Avenue adjacent to the Awami League central office.

At around 12:45 pm, thick smoke belched out from the closed store and spread around the adjacent shops and offices including the Awami League office. The fire created panic among the AL nomination seekers, who were standing in a queue then to face interview by the AL Parliamentary Board for final selection.

Fire Brigade sources said, nine fire fighting units rushed to the spot at around 12:55 pm and it took them nearly four hours to bring the fire under control.

The blaze was extinguished by 4:50 pm, but it took another two hours to complete the darning down exercise, fire service officials said.

The cause of the fire could not be immediately identified and the extent of the damage is yet to be ascertained, the officials added.

The fire fighters dressed up in protective suits and breathing apparatus used water, oxygen gas and foam compound in their relentless effort to bring the fire under control. At this stage, smoke in various colours with bad odours from burning chemicals engulfed the locality.

A huge contingent of police was deployed in the area to keep onlookers at a safe distance.

No major damage was caused to other floors of the building which also housed offices of the Dhaka District Rover Scouts, Government Transport Pool Employees' Welfare Cooperative Society, Modern Films, Modern Cultural Academy, Razzak Shoe Store, Rajeeb Hotel and Ambassador Tailors.

But the panic stricken people moved out of the three nearby buildings — the AL office building, Bata Bazaar building and Ibrahim Mansion — to escape suffocation from smoke.

A nearby showroom of the DU Instruments Ltd at 30, Bangabandhu Avenue was also found closed yesterday.

## Menon blames big parties for commercialising politics

Workers Party general secretary Rashed Khan Menon yesterday blamed the big political parties for "commercialising education and politics," reports UNB.

He apprehended that the 'commercialised politics' would turn the parliament into a club of moneyed businessmen, corrupt men miscreants and civil-military bureaucrats.

Speaking at a meeting with school, college and madrasah teachers at Saheed Suhrawardi College at Munshir Taluk of Uzipur thana in Barisal district, Menon regretted that honest, meritorious and committed politicians could not survive in the current trend of politics.

The WP leader called for nationalising the country's education system by introducing uniform education for all. The existing system is only widening discrepancy in the society, he said.

He criticised the past governments for commercialising the education system depriving the poor of their educational rights.

## All but Deif of Hamas arrested

GAZA CITY, May 4: Palestinian police have arrested all members of the armed wing of Hamas except for Mohammad Deif, the group's chief and Israel's most wanted man, the Palestinian security chief said today.

"We have detained all the members of the Ezzedin Al-Qassam armed group except for its leader Mohammad Deif, who are still hunting for," Colonel Mohammad Dahlan, head of Palestinian Preventive Security in Gaza, told AFP.

"We want to capture him," he said.

Dahlan also said Palestinian police had virtually dismantle a secret organisation drawn from Ezzedin Al-Qassam members to carry out car bombings in Gaza and attack the Palestinian Authority (PA).

"We have arrested almost all the members of the secret Hamas cells in Gaza, including the main coordinator between the cells and Ezzedin Al-Qassam," he said, identifying the man as Ibrahim Al-Maqadmah, a doctor at the Islamic University here.

## Baltic leaders agree to boost economy and combat crime

VISBY, Sweden, May 4: The 11 leaders of the Baltic Sea states concluded a landmark two-day summit here today with a call for increased regional cooperation to stimulate their economies and to combat crime and pollution, reports AFP.

In their final declaration, the heads of government agreed to form a task-force of their personal representatives to map out and implement joint action to curb organised crime.

## Some changes in admin

By Staff Correspondent

The government have made some more changes in the administration. It was learnt from sources.

Former IGP ASM Shahjahan has been appointed secretary of the Youth & Sports Ministry; Abhab Ahmed, Secretary of the Environment & Forest Ministry; Hasnat Abdul Hye Education Secretary while Syed Magrub Morshed Chairman of the Land Reforms Board.

It was also learnt that Abdul Mannan is being transferred from the Chief Adviser's office as Additional Secretary (current charge) at the Election Commission.

## Chandraswami refused bail

NEW DELHI, May 4: A controversial Hindu guru reputed to be close to Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao was remanded in jail custody for 10 days today after being arrested for alleged swindling, reports AFP.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Prem Kumar ordered Chandraswami and his secretary, Kailashnath Agarwal, to be kept in New Delhi's top security Thar Jail until May 14.

Kumar cancelled the bail granted to Chandraswami and Agarwal in 1988 in connection with the charge that they had cheated an expatriate Indian businessman of 100,000 dollars.

The 47-year-old mystic and his secretary were arrested Thursday night in the southern Indian city of Madras by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officers and brought to New Delhi. They were held overnight in Thar.

Chandraswami's lawyer, Ashok Arora, had argued Friday that the charge that they had duped Lakhudhai Patel by allegedly promising to swing lucrative paper and newsprint contracts was false.

The businessman said he had been cheated in 1983 and took the trouble of complaining in 1988. We are now in 1996 and Patel has not been showing any interest in the proceedings," Arora said.

"In my humble opinion, the case will take a decade. Nothing has been proved. Will my client stay in jail for the period?" he said, adding that Chandraswami had not flouted any CBI structures which were imposed on him.

The CBI imposed travel restrictions on Chandraswami in 1988 but he was allowed permission to go abroad several times since then.

## 50 killed

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a newly built house, but it was unclear if anyone was inside.

The pilot apparently was trying to land in an open area since the sandstorm blanketed Khartoum airport, the officials said, insisting on anonymity.

They had no explanation for the crash was 325 kilometers (200 miles) northwest of Khartoum.

Many of the dead were students from Bahr el-Ghazal University in southern Sudan, the officials said.

MENA said the flight originated at Wau, the capital of Bahr el-Ghazal state about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) southwest of Khartoum, and had made a stop at el-Obeid in Kordofan state en route to the capital.

The MENA report did not say if any foreigners were aboard the aircraft. Sudan has few Western visitors. The United States and other Western countries accuse its Muslim fundamentalist government of supporting Islamic radicals and Sudan is on the US State Department's list of terrorist-sponsoring countries.

Last Feb. 26, a C-130 transport belonging to the Sudanese military crashed at Jebel Aulia, a village 38 kilometers (24 miles) south of the capital. All 91 people aboard were killed.

Military officials blamed the crash on mechanical problems. The Sudanese military is said to be short of spare parts because few Western countries are willing to sell it arms and military equipment.

# The Midnight File

## Chechens attack Russian Interior Ministry Dept

GROZNY, Russia, May 4: Chechen rebels attacked the Russian Interior Ministry department in the Chechen capital today, firing automatic weapons at the building from all sides, officials said, reports AP.

## US Senate body okays \$267b defence bill

WASHINGTON, May 4: The Senate armed services committee reported yesterday its approval of a 267-billion dollar defence bill, 12.9 billion dollar more than President Bill Clinton requested for weapons and military programmes next year, reports Reuter.

The bill includes 300 million dollar more than Clinton sought for a US missile defence and approves more fighter planes, helicopters, rocket launchers and other arms than he wanted.

The house national security committee approved its version of the bill on Wednesday with similar weapons increases but seeks 350 million dollar more for missile defence development.

The Republican-led Congress is pressing separate bills requiring development of an antimissile system to be built by 2003 to protect against a small number of missiles fired by some rogue nation. Clinton vetoed a speedup last year, saying it would waste money because US intelligence agencies see no such missile threat for at least a decade.

Defence Secretary William Perry has said the Clinton administration objects to the 13 billion dollar overall hike, congressmen said, implying the President might veto the defence bill again this year.

The Senate bill does not include house provisions Clinton would almost certainly veto to invalidate his policy allowing gays in the military, restore mandatory dismissal of service members infected with HIV and ban sales of sex magazines and videotapes in military stores.

Both bills include a three per cent military pay raise and increases in the basic housing allowance. Both also add money for warplanes and other weapons beyond Clinton's request that the committees had invited the military to put on a wish list.

Republicans said Clinton's 39 billion dollar request within his total 254 billion dollar defence request for weapons and hardware procurement was the lowest since the Korean

war, far short of the 60 billion dollar a year military chiefs wanted by 1998.

The Senate bill would increase procurement money to 46.6 billion dollar, including: 2.2 billion dollar for 12 of the new F/A-18E/F navy fighters planes built by McDonnell Douglas Corp. plus 234 million dollar for six older F/A-18C/D Hornets that Clinton did not request.

2.4 billion dollar for nine C-17 troop transport and cargo planes built by McDonnell Douglas, one more than requested.

383 million dollar for 12 marine AV-8B Harrier craft built by McDonnell Douglas, two more than requested.

213 million dollar for four F-16 Falcons built by Lockheed-Martin that Clinton did not request.

267 million dollar for four C-130J cargo planes built by Lockheed Corp., three more than Clinton sought.

168 million dollar for 31 Kiowa Warrior helicopters built by Bell Helicopter and Boeing Vertol, two more than requested.

910 million dollar for six V-22 tilt rotor aircraft built by Bell Helicopter and Boeing Vertol, two more than requested.

## Chinese dissident Liu Gang permitted to stay in US

WASHINGTON, May 4: Leading Chinese dissident Liu Gang, one of the most prominent pro-democracy leaders to flee China, has been granted permission to stay in the United States temporarily, the State Department said yesterday, reports Reuter.

Spokesman Nicholas Burns said Liu was admitted under a section of the immigration and nationality act that gives broad authority to the attorney general to permit a person to enter the United States temporarily for emergency reasons, or when it is in the public interest.

"We are well aware of his actions in 1989... to try to build support for democracy." We're well aware that he was one of the leaders of a movement that, of course, we felt at the time and we still feel, stood for democracy. And we certainly have great respect for him, Burns said, adding: "We facilitated him entry into the United States under our law."

## Prokrichi statement on Abu Hena

Leaders of Prokrichi (Prokoushali Chikiteak and Krishibud Samannay Parishad) yesterday contradicted press reports labelling former secretary Abu Hena, who joined the BNP, as a Prokrichi leader, reports UNB.

In a joint statement, they said Abu Hena, who lost his job during the BNP regime, formed BCS Coordination Council and became its chairman. He was made the Secretary General of Prokrichi BCS Central Action Committee when it was constituted for the sake of realising a 17-point charter of demands, they said.

The statement said the Action Committee is a meeting on April 23 seriously criticised his 'duel role' in the recent anti-government movement and resolved to elect its new President and Secretary General at a council session on May 20 next.

The statement was issued by Secretary General of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Dr Kazi Shahidul Alam, Secretary General of Bangladesh Krishibud Institution Dr MA Razaque and Honorary General Secretary of Engineers Institution Md Kamruzzaman.

## Govt bonds

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years' fixed deposit rate is more than 8.5 per cent and the government itself is offering 9.5 per cent on various savings certificates.

When asked for his comment on the finance ministry official said issuance of bonds is a usual for the government. However, he did not confirm the roll-over of the 50 per cent NIB funds.

Bankers are now concerned at the non-payment of the principal and accrued interests in time as well as delay in payment of interests against the T&T bonds.

"It speaks of total mismanagement of government bonds and reflects weakness of the government regarding debt management," said the Managing Director of a private bank. "If it continues the country's risk rating among the international investors will go down and tell upon the overall trust on government issued instruments."