

Taliban still defiant

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The plan is going ahead and God willing, it is being implemented, but it is a huge task beyond the will and comprehension of human beings. If God's help is with us, this will happen within a short period of time." He said the Taliban would never join a broad-based government in Kabul following their retreat. "We will not accept a government of wrong-doers. We prefer death than to be part of an evil government." However, the fate of Taliban's spiritual fortress of Kandahar remained unclear with anti-Taliban tribal fighters reported to be in control of the main airport but the militia insisted it had the city. The Northern Alliance, including more than 10,000 foreigners, were surrounded in the northern city of Kunduz. An alliance general said an offensive on the trapped city had been held up to allow civilians to get out.

province southwest of Kabul as they retreated closer to Kandahar where hostile tribal groups battled their way to the outskirts. US warplanes bombed the city which is the headquarters of Omar. Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted a Taliban spokesman as saying eight people were killed, 22 injured and widespread damage caused. Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun tribal leader who has the support of the United States, said he was trying to negotiate the surrender of Kandahar as fighting raged on the city's outskirts. A delegation of tribal elders from six Afghan provinces is also to go to Kandahar to negotiate the peaceful surrender of the Taliban, aides to former king Mohammed Zahir Shah said in Pakistan. Karzai said the airport had already fallen into the hands of local tribesmen and there was chaos in the city. US warplanes also bombed positions around Kunduz, but an opposition general said a threatened offensive had been held back to let civilians flee. General Mohammad Daud said the Taliban had up to 30,000 fighters, "including more than 10,000 foreign mercenaries, Chechens, Pakistanis and Uighurs" dug in around the northern city. "The town is surrounded, but its mayor has urged us to put off an attack for two days to allow civilians to flee," Daud added. The general highlighted the hatred felt toward the Taliban's foreign fighters by many Afghans. "Our task in this town is to distinguish between the Afghan Taliban and the international terrorists who are fighting with them," Daud told a press conference in the nearby city of Taloqan, which fell earlier this week.

Hasina plans

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such atrocities did not happen," the Awami League president said. "Only offence of the victims is that they voted for Awami League or wanted to vote for Awami League, their only offence is that they wanted to exercise their constitutional right. Hasina gave staggering figures of victims claiming that more than 1000 women, girls and children were raped 300 to 400 in Bholia alone and nearly 900 Awami League workers were killed so far. Some 22 minor girls are also on the list of rape victims, she said. "The liberal, democratic and secular image of Bangladesh we had established in last five years is now lost with the staging of massacre of humanity," she told the newsmen.

Hasina said the first one month's rule by the BNP-Jamaat government was marked by terrorism, murders, dead bodies, looting, rapes, forcible occupation of private and public institutions and naked politicisation through wholesale transfers retirement and replacement. Some 200-250 officers have been made OSD so far.

In last one month more than 65,000 offences have taken place throughout the country. The police stations declined to register cases from the victims, she alleged.

The Awami League chief said the planned convention would expose how innocent people are being tortured and how their fundamental and human rights trampled under the BNP-Jamaat regime. Hasina's political secretary Sabir Hossain Chowdhury was present.

Rouful Hassan

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National Mosque after Juma prayers.

A Political Science graduate from Dhaka University, Rouful joined the then Pakistan Observer in 1970. He also worked for The Daily People for a while before returning to The Observer after the Liberation War. He was the Bangladesh correspondent of the Dubai-based Khaleej Times and the Radio Netherlands. He also worked for the Weekly Holiday.

Rouful was also president of the Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association and a member of the Overseas Correspondents Association of Bangladesh.

He left behind three brothers, four sisters, his mother and a host of friends, relatives and admirers to mourn his death. His younger brother Roquibul Hassan is a former Bangladesh cricket captain.

BSS adds: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia condoled the death of the eminent journalist. LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also expressed deep shock at the death of Rouful Hassan.

President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Secretary General Akhter Ahmed Khan and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) President Altaf Mahmud and General Secretary Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan in a condolence message expressed deep shock at the death of Rouful Hassan.

National Press Club president Khondokder Manirul Alam and General Secretary Swapon Kumar Shah last night expressed their deep shock at his death. In a message of condolence, they recalled the contributions of late Hassan in the field of sports journalism.

SM Jahurul Alam, President and Parveen F Chowdhury, General Secretary of the Overseas Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (OCA) condoled the death of Rauful Hassan, who was also a member of the organisation.

Bangladesh Sports Journalists' Association also condoled the death.



President Badruddoza Chowdhury placing wreath at the mazar of President Ziaur Rahman in the city yesterday.

50 injured as pickets clash

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The LDF called for the 6:00am-12:00pm shutdown to protest the government move to sell out gas and the US attack on Afghanistan and also to protest communal and terrorist acts. The main opposition Awami League later lent its support to the front, a conglomerate of eight left-leaning political parties, to enforce the general strike.

This was the first countrywide hartal since the BNP-led four-party alliance formed government last month following its landslide victory in the parliamentary election. The hartal disrupted normal life and economic activities in the capital as shops and markets and educational institutions were mostly kept closed. However, rickshaw plied the roads while a significant number of vehicles, including some double-deckers and minibuses, were out on some specific routes and on the VIP roads.

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A group of JCD activists allegedly attacked the GCO activists while they were demonstrating against the arrest of their leaders at about 11:00am. Later, the GCO brought out a procession on the campus demanding immediate release of the arrested leaders by 24 hours.

Activists of Committee for Protecting Mineral Resources yesterday brought out a procession from the city's Dainik Bangla crossing in support of the hartal. Police intercepted the procession near Bijoynagar crossing and clubbed the processionists when they tried to proceed towards the BNP central office. Some activists of the committee sustained injuries in the police action.

was dispersed near Paltan crossing at about 10:25am. Haji Selim brought out the procession under the banner of Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee of 75. Later, he brought out another procession from in front of Jatiya Press Club. Sources said Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and workers beat up and drove out activists of Biplobi Chhatra Moitri when they took out a procession on Jagannath University College campus at about 9:00am. Several persons were injured during the incident, the sources added.

Our Jahangirnagar University correspondent reports that police arrested three leaders of Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO) when they were picketing near the Dairy Farm Gate on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway at about 10:30am.

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Later, the committee leaders held a rally at Mukhtangan. Speakers at the rally said people have given their verdict against the planned export of gas to India by observing the hartal.

They threatened to continue with agitation programmes until the government abandons the proposal on gas export and observed that it should rather try to realise compensation for the Magurchara incident.

The leaders demanded cancellation of all contracts signed during the Awami League rule, as they said those are against the interest of the nation.

Different left-leaning political parties and students fronts in separate press statements yesterday congratulated the people on their observance of the half-day country-wide hartal to protect the country's natural resources.

The organisations condemned the police excess on the activists of different political and student fronts and demanded unconditional release of leaders and activists arrested during the hartal hours.

The organisations are Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Workers Party, Left Democratic Front (LDF), Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU), Ganotantrik Biplobi Jole, Biplobi Oikya Front, Bangladesh Chhatra Front and Bangladesh Ganotantrik Ainjibi Samity.

Meanwhile, the half-day hartal passed off peacefully in Sylhet, Rajshahi and Chuadanga districts. Vehicles kept off the streets while attendance in offices was thin. Police and pickets clashed at Shaheb Bazar at about 10:45 a.m. in Rajshahi. Pickets damaged two minibuses in the city's Alupatti area and six of them were arrested from the spot.

Eastern Industries manager assaulted by extortionists

UNB, N'ganj

The manager of Eastern Industries at Shaikura was beaten mercilessly by terrorists yesterday for refusing to pay illegal tolls.

Manager Akkas Ali said a group of terrorists from Pagla led by Masood demanded Tk 1 lakh few days ago. They asked for the tolls, yesterday. On refusal they beat him.

Police rescued and sent him to the hospital with severe head injuries.

Another report said: Fatullah JCD president Read Mohammad Chowdhury was arrested for demanding toll from a resident yesterday evening.

Police said Read was wanted in a number of cases including murder.

Local BNP leaders were putting pressure on police to set Read free, police said.

3 businessmen kidnapped by BNP cadres, rescued

UNB, Ctg

Police rescued three businessmen abducted from Dabua Amirhat area of Raajan upazila here yesterday noon.

Police said armed goons allegedly led by BNP cadres Azizur Rahman and Sundar Nasir kidnapped Lavlu Hossain, Ashok Poddar and Noor Mohammad Sawdagar demanding Tk 20 lakh as ransom and took shelter in the neighbouring rubber garden.

The terrorists sent letters to the victims' relatives to meet their demand.

Being informed, Raajan police launched a vigorous hunt to rescue the businessmen. Sensing police raid, the terrorists escaped the area freeing the businessmen at frontier Taltoli area yesterday evening, police said.

The police operation, however, is on to nab the terrorists.

Attack on press confce AL observes hartal in Bagerhat

UNB, Bagerhat

A half-day hartal, called by district Awami League protesting attack on its press conference, was observed peacefully yesterday.

Educational institutions and shops remained closed and all modes of vehicles, except a few rickshaws, went off the roads during hartal hours.

Sixteen people, including former state minister Dr Mozammel Hossain and seven local newsmen, were injured in the attack on the news conference on November 11.

Timber

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Alim and Masir Rahman whose names were in the list denied that they sought timber permits.

Taking the floor after the question-answer session, the two MPs demanded inquiry on how their names were included in the list although they did not seek timber permits.

As the two MPs drew his attention, the minister thanked them and told the House that some other MPs also made similar allegations to him personally. He then assured the members that he would conduct an inquiry into the matter.

Later, Masir Rahman and Nurul Islam Moni taking floor on point of order demanded inquiry and measures against those who did so.

According to the list, the 14 ministers got 6,150 cft of timber and the MPs 57,400 cft. The eminent personalities including civil and military officials and some businessmen got 2,43,131 cft.

Gas: No scope

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Both Hassan and Nuruddin said certain quarters are conspiring to export gas. Some influential men are acting as agents of foreign oil companies, they said.

ABM Musa said it seems the government will decide to export gas. Mere holding of seminars will not stop it. Only people can resist it. "We have to make the people understand the result of gas export".

Political parties, non-government organisations and the media will have to play a strong role in creating public awareness in this regard, he added.

The speakers said Bangladesh will have the fate of Nigeria if gas is exported.

They said the actual recoverable reserve should be determined first and if exportable surplus is found, gas could be exported in value added form like CNG and LNG.

Besides value addition, it will create jobs in the country.

They said gas is the only pollution-free energy and its various use in the country should be explored to avoid environmental pollution.

Gripper gives tourists

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His opening partner Deon Ebrahim, clipped in with a polished 41 and Grant Flower added 33.

Enamul Hoque, who bowled a marathon 28-over in his first spell, finished the day with two for 65 from 35 overs. Young Mashrafe bagged one wicket for 65 runs off 20 overs.

Bangladesh, who went into the match with only two seamers, had a scare when paceman Mohammad Sharif strained his left hamstring while delivering the first ball of his 16th over during the last session. He was immediately taken off the field.

Physio John Gloster however assured that he would get back into action in the morning today. "It was a simple case of dehydration. He was sweating too much and had lost lot of fluids. Hopefully, he will be all right after taking rest tonight (last night)."

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Scam in Mig-29s

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Federation at a cost of US\$96.7956 million. However, maintenance, training and post-marketing engineering services eventually pushed the cost up to US\$124 million, he added.

Similarly, the government signed a contract with South Korean Daewoo Heavy Industries Ltd. to buy a frigate for navy at a cost of US\$98.991 million. The frigate was commissioned for the Bangladesh Navy on June 20, 2001.

While raising his starred question, Shahidul Islam observed that the issue was very sensitive. He alleged that there were irregularities in the purchase and relatives of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina were involved in the entire process.

As the answer of the scripted question was a bit long, the chair considered it to have been read out. But, the questioner objected, saying that since the matter was sensitive it should be read out before the House. As soon as Islam concluded, Industries Minister M K Anwar rose to request the Chair to allow the minister in charge of defence in parliament to read out the answer. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar then allowed the minister to continue.

To a supplementary question, the minister said there could be lack

of transparency in the purchase and that's why the government has launched a probe into the allegations of corruption by the Awami League government in the procurement.

Responding to another supplementary question by Mashiur Rahman of the treasury bench, Hafiz informed the House that of the eight Mig-29s, three have been grounded at the moment. The frigate is all right but the government is examining whether there is any technical fault in the frigate, he added.

Tajul Islam Chowdhury of Jatiya Party asked the minister whether the purchase of Mig-29s and frigate was necessary for a poor country like Bangladesh. The minister said the previous AL government had procured them and they knew whether these were necessary or not.

After a one-day recess, the House resumed its business at 4.25 p.m., nearly half an hour behind the schedule. Yesterday's sitting was the first private members' day in the new parliament. The House yesterday disposed of several private members resolution.

Several lawmakers spoke on the point of order on different issues during the sitting.



Mother of Shamsun Nahar, a senior staff nurse of the BSMMUH who died yesterday following, what the employees union of the hospital claimed, wrong treatment.

NBR misses

FROM PAGE 12
Rahman asked the NBR to collect an additional 500 crore during the current fiscal. The additional amount is yet to be included in the monthly target.

During a recent meeting with the NBR, a team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) wanted to know whether the revenue collection target would be achieved.

"We have appraised them about our projection regarding the target despite an economic recession throughout the world," Dr Shoeb Ahmed told The Daily Star.

During an hour-long discussion with the NBR chairman the IMF team also underscored the need for quick implementation of various reforms programme in revenue sector.

The team appreciated various steps taken by the new government, the chairman informed. "They were quite happy with the government move to expand the income tax network."

The team was also appraised about the government's initiative to simplify the custom system at the ports and official harassment while releasing goods.

"Earlier, at least 52 persons had to sign a bill of entry which is reduced to 12 now," he said.

The NBR chairman said that the new government wanted the target met without imposing any new duty or tax.

Apparel export to US

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earlier and there are hardly any fresh orders, according to BGMEA sources.

Some RMG units have managed orders at 40 to 50 per cent discounts in cutting and making (CM) charge. As export prices are hit and orders dwindle, RMG quota prices are also dipping dangerously at the country's informal quota market. Usually a hot category, quota 347 sold for US\$90 last year. But this year the price is as low as US\$12, wiping much of the investments of the exporters in the quota. And there are many RMG exporters sitting with huge quota, but don't have orders.

A BGMEA survey conducted in the last week of October on 100 RMG units showed about 29 of those had reported cancellation of orders that caused them US\$14.47 million in loss.

The downtrend and cancellation of orders have forced the country's readymade garment owners to go for closure of their units.

According to a BGMEA study, nearly 1300 RMG units out of 3,400 units were closed following the September 11 terror attack and global recession. As a result, about four lakh workers lost their jobs.

"This is just the tip of an iceberg.

We will be able to see the real face of the crisis after a few months," Kutubuddin Ahmed, the BGMEA president, said.

Against this backdrop a business delegation left the country for Washington to lobby for duty and quota free access of Bangladesh apparels to the US market. The delegation led by Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury will have discussion with the US administration to make its point.

Now, everybody in the RMG sector is hoping that the delegation succeeds in reversing the trend. "If we can't get duty and quota free access to the US market, the disaster in the RMG will have a chain effect on other sectors too. If, God forbids, most of the RMG units go bankrupt due to this disaster, the banking sector, the insurance industry and many other sectors will be in a dire straits," Kutubuddin told The Daily Star before leaving for Washington on November 12.

Earlier, a delegation led by Foreign Minister AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, now the president-designate, returned home in the first week from Washington without any 'positive promise' from the US administration.

President pays tribute

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oath Wednesday evening, stood before the memorial for some time in solemn silence as the bugle played the last post.

Chief of Army Staff Lt General Harun Ar-Rashid, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Abu Taher and Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal M Rafiqul Islam were present on the occasion.

The new president later placed wreath at the Shaheed Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur and prayed to Almighty Allah for their eternal peace.

President Chowdhury also paid his deep respect to President Ziaur Rahman at his mazar at Sher-e-Banglanagar. He placed wreath at the tomb and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Then the president went to the central Shaheed Minar and placed wreath there. He spent there some time in solemn silence and recalled the heroic sacrifices of the language martyrs.

Earlier, the president was given guard of honour by the President's Guard Regiment at Bangabhaban yesterday morning marking his ascent to the presidency.

The new president, who was sworn in Wednesday evening, took salute and inspected the guard.

25 picked up

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Shahabuddin, Minar, Monir Ahmed, Kabir Uddin, Siraj, Mia Bhai, Jasim, Helal, Hanif, Belayet, Zafar, Mainuddin and Zakir.

Police also arrested wives of two BNP leaders, Afroza Begum and Rahima Begum, "as per instructions from the administration."

Three cartridges, three machetes and two Chinese axes were recovered from their possession.

Police said many of the arrested have cases of terrorism, murder and robbery against them. "They were also involved in post-election violence in the district," said a police official.

Meanwhile, Jubo Dal and JCD brought out a procession in Feni town and held a rally at Shaheed Minar yesterday protesting the arrests. They also put up a barricade at Dania on Feni-Sonagazi highway.

They however removed the barricade after 30 minutes following intervention by Deputy Commissioner (DC) AFM Solaiman Chowdhury and Superintendent of Police (SP) of Feni.

Sources said a total of 12 political murders took place in the district since the October 1 general election.

The DC and SP said the drive to arrest troublemakers would go on for some more days.

Agro-tech

FROM PAGE 12
Nurul Alam called for use of agro-technology to replace the pollutant polyethylene substances. He said that environment-friendly substitutes made from jute can easily replace polythene.

Dr MA Hamid Miah distributed the cash awards and certificates among the winners. Golam Mustafa, former Director of Photography of Bangladesh Television, Abdul Malek Babul, head of Bangladesh Photographic Institute and Shafiquddin Btu, senior photojournalist of the Inquilab received the first, second and third prizes respectively. Consolation prizes were given to four other participants.

Shipu's family

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Shipu's brother Ishtiaque Ahmed said yesterday that his family is feeling insecure and fears an attack by Hasib, whom the police investigation found guilty of shooting Shipu.

"It is completely beyond my understanding how a self confessed killer obtains bail, walks free and goes on to threaten the innocent family members of the victim," Ishtiaque said.

Joy Hasib had given a confessional statement before the CMM's Court.

The Home Ministry recently asked the authorities concerned to report on the progress of four sensational murders. These are film actor Salman Shah murder case, Advocate Habibur Rahman Mandol murder case, Taraj Uddin murder case and Rushdania Bushara Phool murder case.

Sources said the government is also planning special steps to look into some other murder cases, Shipu murder, double murder inside Sutrapur Rifle Club, Sajal murder at Science Laboratory and police constable murder inside Nur Mosque at Mohammadpur in the city.

Saifur blasts AL

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tion-sharing contracts (PSCs) with foreign oil companies and allocated gas exploration blocks indiscriminately without judging optimum requirements.

"During our previous tenure (91-96), we signed PSCs with Occidental and Cairn considering domestic requirements," Saifur said.

But the immediate past government signed a number of PSCs without thinking how the surplus gas would be utilised.

Saifur also said that the immediate past government decided to sell gas, as was stated in the fifth five-year plan prepared by it. The past government clearly stated that there was adequate gas reserve in the country. It also said there was a potential market in India and the country would earn foreign exchange through gas export.

Saifur said the economy is in a fragile state now and the government is trying to restore the economy within six months.

The government is acting fast in taking remedial measures including cutting interest rates, slashing the annual development programme (ADP), cancelling projects in unproductive sectors and is taking other steps to boost the private sector and diversify exports.

Saifur blamed the immediate

past government for what he said the macroeconomic imbalances now. "Fiscal deficit has increased and foreign exchange reserve now can barely meet one month's import bill. There has been indiscriminate expenditure which widened the revenue shortfall," the minister said.

Government's Borrowing from the banking sector and interest rates on saving certificates were high. Debt servicing accounted for 22 to 24 percent of the revenue budget.

On the other hand, flow of foreign loan declined as the previous government failed to carry out reforms.

"During our previous tenure, we used to get around US\$ 1.5 billion soft loans on an average every year. But it came down during the tenure of the immediate past government. So it had to arrange funds from domestic sources at high interest rate," Saifur said.

Responding to a question on law and order situation, the minister said the government has to be "ruthless" to improve it.

"This is first priority of the government and we should be more active to improve the law and order situation to attract investment."

He also spoke on cancellation of the NAM summit, reactivating the SAARC and the capital market in the country.