

SL cabinet demands reinstatement of sacked ministers

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's beleaguered government struggled yesterday to take back its key defence, police and information portfolios as a hostile president tightened her grip on power through a state of emergency.

The cabinet moved a resolution demanding the immediate reinstatement of the three ministers sacked by President Chandrika Kumaratunga as troops patrolled Colombo streets in scenes last witnessed before the truce with Tamil rebels.

Kumaratunga was exercising her powers as the new minister for defence, interior and information by making key appointments to run the ministries, her office said.

The president moved against Prime

Minister Ranil Wickre-mesinghe Tuesday as he was in Washington, where he won an endorsement from President George W. Bush for his "leadership".

But the United States put on hold an announcement on a possible free trade agreement with Sri Lanka because of the political turmoil, government spokesman G. L. Peiris said here.

He said the cabinet at a meeting Wednesday asked for a reconvening of parliament, suspended by Kumaratunga until November 19, and for the sacked ministers to be restored to their posts.

"The cabinet expressed its firm opinion that any change of portfolios and subjects should not be made by the president without prior consultation with the prime minister according to the written instructions of the attorney

general," Peiris said.

Kumaratunga is the head of cabinet, but she did not attend its meeting Wednesday. Her party is in opposition in parliament.

Fearing unrest when Wickre-mesinghe returns Friday, the president Thursday summoned a meeting of top police officers to discuss security arrangements, a police source said.

Peiris accused the president of acting in "pursuit of power" and slapping a state of emergency, which he said had scared off prospective foreign holiday makers.

"Over 2,000 tourists have already cancelled their holidays in Sri Lanka and more cancellations are pouring in at a time when we were expecting the best tourist winter season ever," Peiris said

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Bank managers to face action for not receiving torn notes

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday asked commercial banks to take action against their respective branch managers who are refusing to receive torn and soiled notes from the public.

Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed gave the directive at a meeting with chief executives of the nationalised and private commercial banks at the central bank's conference room.

The meeting was apprised that the central bank teams inspected 150 bank branches where they found 50 percent were not carrying out the order to change the defective notes, Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Nazrul Huda told reporters.

He said the governor also sent his personal aides with some torn and soiled notes to different bank branches in the city's Gulshan area, but the banks refused to take the notes.

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6 more dengue patients hospitalised

UNB, Dhaka

Six more patients with dengue fever were admitted to four city hospitals yesterday, raising the total to 62.

Of them, one each was admitted to Suhrawardy and Shishu hospitals, and two each to Holy Family and Dhaka Medical College hospitals, officials at the Dengue Control Room said.

Unofficial sources said the number of dengue patients would be much higher than the official one. A number of influenza patients were also being diagnosed as cases of dengue fever.

Another 12 patients, suspected to have been affected with dengue,

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Sand instead of fabrics in container

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Fabrics of an importer said to be worth about Tk 11 lakh went missing at the Chittagong Sea Port Wednesday.

Sources said the fabrics in a 20-foot container were imported on the QC Star landed at the port recently.

The C&F (clearing and forwarding) agents found sacks of sands when they opened the container, port sources said.

The mysterious missing caused the importer a loss of about Tk 19 lakh, as he had already paid up Tk 8 lakh to the customs authorities for the import.

It is suspected that either the fabrics were stolen from CCT (Chittagong Container Terminal) yard or the exporter deceived the importer, sources said.

An investigation is going on, a port official said.



PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of traders throw up shops along the main road in Paltan in Dhaka yesterday for a brisk business in the run-up to the Eid-ul-fitr ignoring the law against occupation of walkways.

Petrobangla on track of corporatisation

Less lucrative benefits on offer for contractual appointees

SHARIER KHAN

The government has finally appointed three managing directors and as many directors on contract to gradually

corporatise three vital affiliates of Petrobangla.

The appointments were finalised Wednesday after months of delay and amid strong protest by the ruling-party backed trade union activists.

Some of the appointees are however yet to decide on taking up the jobs by next week, as the offers appear not that lucrative as it was planned initially.

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Govt in a fix over next cabinet secretary

REZAUL KARIM

The government is in a fix over appointment of the cabinet secretary, the highest position in the civil administration, after the incumbent goes on a leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) on November 23.

Most senior ministers and policymakers of the key ruling party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, are in favour of extending the service of Sa'adat Husain.

But a section of the civil administration and senior officials at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) are opposing the option.

If Sa'adat is not given extension, the second most senior secretary Badiur Rahman would walk into the job.

But the government has yet to take him, one of the two serving CSP secretaries regarded for their professional excellence, into confidence for reasons unknown.

If Planning Commission Member Badiur is not chosen for the most-coveted administrative post,

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Saifur hits out at Huda over fund remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over certain remarks of the communications minister in the Jatiya Sangsad recently on construction of roads and termed those unparliamentary.

Saifur was speaking at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on his ministry at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Responding to queries on construction of roads and bridges, the communications minister said in the House that those would be completed when the finance ministry provided funds.

But Saifur said yesterday the finance ministry already disbursed funds.

"How did he (communications minister) say that?" he asked.

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Sehri, Iftar timings			
Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
11	7		5-19
12	8	4-47	5-19

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Prayer Timings			
November 7			
	Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	4-46	5-00	
Juma	12-15	1-20	
Asr	4-00	4-15	
Maghrib	5-19	5-24	
Esha	7-30	8-00	
Source: Islamic Foundation			

Govt to set up 6 markets to break brokers' control

STAR REPORT

The government will set up six wholesale essentials markets in Dhaka and its edges in a bid to check the influence of brokers in the marketing of vegetables and other perishables.

Under the plan, Karwan Bazar market will be shifted to Hatirjheel and five new markets will be sited at Tongi, Amin Bazar, Lalbagh, Khilgaon and Jatrabari.

The commerce ministry at a meeting yesterday proposed to form a high-powered committee under the local government, rural development and cooperatives minister.

Agriculture, land, commerce, communications ministers and the mayor of Dhaka will also sit on the committee.

The body will decide whether the markets will be set up on government finance or on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury chaired the meeting while State

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Hideouts raided in Saudi, 2 killed

REUTERS, Riyadh

At least one militant blew himself up during a police raid in the holy city of Makkah yesterday, hours after another militant was shot dead in Riyadh as authorities cracked down on suspected al-Qaeda activists.

Yesterday's raids, the second action against militant hideouts this week, came shortly after the United States and Britain warned of terror attacks during Ramadan.

A Saudi security source said police in Makkah had been hunting down militants when one of them killed himself.

"Most probably one of the fugitives blew himself up. Another suspect may also have done the same, but we are still waiting for autopsy results," the source told Reuters.

There were no immediate reports of other casualties.

The raid took place in the same area of Mecca where two militants believed linked to al-Qaeda were killed in a shootout with security forces earlier this week.

Earlier on Thursday, police raided a suspected hideout in the capital Riyadh at dawn, shooting dead one militant.

The Saudi Press Agency quoted an Interior Ministry official as saying eight policemen were slightly wounded in the clash in the capital's southern Suweidi area.

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