

Signs of lowering tension in Yemen

Military panel begins lifting barricades

AFP, Sanaa

A Yemeni military commission began returning the capital to normality yesterday, removing checkpoints and barricades erected during months of deadly protests against President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Bulldozers were seen removing sand berms thrown up by the pro-Saleh Central Security service at the Ascer roundabout, under the supervision of members of the joint commission formed by the new opposition-led government, an AFP correspondent reported.

The neighbourhood was scene to frequent clashes between Saleh loyalists and demonstrators marching from the nearby Change Square -- the focal point of anti-Saleh protests, which was protected by the dissident First Armoured Division led by General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar.

"We have received orders to withdraw from this area following the instructions of the military commission," said an officer of the division at Sitin Street as his troops cleared the area.

The national unity government overseeing the departure from office of long-serving Saleh formed the commission to restore stability under the terms of a transition deal.

The commission is led by Vice President Abdurrahman Mansur Hadi, who has been charged with managing the transfer of power and designated to serve as a consensus president following Saleh's departure, expected in February.

The military commission will also aim to reform the security services, controlled partly by Saleh loyalists, in accordance with the transition deal signed by Saleh in November after more than 10 months of protests against his 33-year rule.

Violence in Yemen has continued since the agreement was inked, notably in Sanaa and in the second city of Taiz, where clashes between loyalist troops and dissidents have left dozens dead.

Prime suspect

known as Welcome Party, Mobin told police during interrogation.

The gang members phone people, claiming to be officials of mobile phone operators. The receivers then are told that they have won a lottery. But to get the prize money, they have to send credits to a certain mobile phone number, police said.

Rubel, 18, Belayet, 23, Kaiyum, 32, Sobhan, 19, and Fayed, 23, were abducted from Maligram Bazar of Bhanga upazila in the district on December 6.

A group of six posing as personnel of Detective Branch picked them up in a white microbus around 2:30pm that day, witnesses said.

Earlier on Thursday, Rafiqul Islam, nephew of Rubel, at a press conference said one Nirob of Aligadha village under Nagarkanda upazila called Sobhan over the phone around 2:30pm on December 6 and asked the 19-year-old to go to Maligram Bazar.

As Sobhan along with Rubel, Belayet and Fayed reached there, the gang hustled them in a microbus.

Bijoy Basak, additional police superintendent of the district, told The Daily Star, "We've names of four people, including Nirob, who might be involved in the abduction. We're trying our best to arrest them."

Meanwhile, Faruk Hossain and Kalam Matubbor, arrested in connection with the abduction, have been sent to jail after a two-day remand.

Awlad Ali Fakir, Faridpur police superintendent, told reporters that they were trying to trace the missing persons and the culprits.

Family members of the victims yesterday complained that nobody from the administration or police contacted them and they doubted if there has been any attempt to find the abductees.

BSF kills 4

FROM PAGE 1

Krishna Nanda village in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram and Naharul Islam, 40, of Meherpur Sadar upazila.

The BSF troops at Gobindapur camp opened fire on several Bangladeshi cattle traders at Daudpur of Katla union in Birampur upazila around 4:00am yesterday, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Motiar and Tajul died on the spot while the others managed to flee unhurt.

The BSF men took away the bodies, Lt Col Tareq Iftekhar Ahmed, acting commander of Phulbari BGB camp, told The Daily Star.

The Indian soldiers fired four shots during the incident that took place around 170 metres from the zero line on the Indian side of the border, he added.

At a flag meeting between the two border forces in Daudpur area yesterday afternoon, Bangladesh protested the killings and demanded return of the bodies.

The Indian side assured Bangladesh of returning the bodies and stopping recurrence of such incidents.

The Kurigram victim came under BSF attack in Camperchhara area near the zero line at Gorakmondal border in Phulbari upazila.

The BSF men at Narayanganj BOP (border observation post) camp of Cooch Behar district fired shots at Alamgir when he went there around 6:30am yesterday to respond to nature's call, reports our Kurigram correspondent quoting Subedar Emran, Shimulbari company commander of BGB.

Alamgir suffered severe injuries but managed to return home near the Gorakmondal border.

He succumbed to his wounds when his relatives had been rushing him to Phulbari Upazila Health Complex, said Mobassher Ali, chairman of Naodanga Union Parishad.

Police sent his body to Kurigram Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

During a flag meeting with BSF in the afternoon in Krishna Nanda area, Lt Col Ziaul Haque Khaled, commanding officer of 45 Border Guard Battalion, strongly protested the shooting incident.

Contacted, Home Secretary Monzur Hossain only said, "The BGB chief has informed me about the killings."

Asked about Indian promises, a senior home ministry official said, "Bangladesh has been pressuring India to stop firing at the borders. Dhaka has raised the issue at almost every bilateral meeting and the Indian side has assured us of taking steps in this regard. But nothing really happens in practice as the killing continues."

Following repeated pleas from Dhaka, New Delhi agreed in March to equip the BSF troops with non-lethal weapons to stop killing of unarmed Bangladeshis.

"The BSF jawans will carry non-lethal arms in addition to the regular ones," BSF Director General Raman Srivastava announced on March 12.

The Daily Star could not reach Home Minister Shahara Khatun over the phone yesterday for her comments.

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Police claimed that during interrogation the suspect confessed to his involvement in the murder and alleged that town unit AL Treasurer Mobarak Hossain before leaving for Malaysia gave him the revolver recovered and 30 bullets, and a motorcycle for the murder.

According to sources, Nazmul Hasan Sharif, the alleged killer of Lokman, gave Delwar the revolver to hold onto it.

Armed criminals gunned down Lokman at the district AL office on November 1.

Killing wild animals in CU is very frequent, which is posing a threat to the biodiversity of the campus, said Prof Benojir Ahmed, chairman of zoology department of CU. Nothing but raising awareness among people can stop the wanton hunting of wild animals, he added.

Sources say that because of its natural environment, the university campus is home to many animals of different species, including deer, monkey, wild hog, porcupine, rabbit, squirrel and birds.

The university is situated on 1753.88 acres of land. A combination of various kinds of trees, wildlife and insects has given the university a unique characteristic.

Amnesty International said that the commission acknowledged problems in Sri Lanka but ignored "serious evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations of the laws of war."

Family members of the victims yesterday complained that nobody from the administration or police contacted them and they doubted if there has been any attempt to find the abductees.

PCB's choice

FROM PAGE 1

But the legality of the press release has been called into question since the PCB has surprisingly named AHM Mustafa Kamal as the candidate.

"We also today reaffirmed our support for nomination of Mr. Mustafa Kamal for ICC's Presidency," said PCB President Zaka Ashraf while speaking in the press meet.

The PCB is not the authority to name Kamal but can endorse only a candidate from Bangladesh.

The PCB has gone out of its way to name someone from Bangladesh, which it cannot do since the BCB is a sovereign organisation.

More importantly, Kamal's name has to be approved by the BCB first and that name will represent PCB and BCB. Since it hasn't been done yet, the incumbent must check his celebrations though he has already claimed victory.

It is a matter of pride and a privilege to receive PCB's support on my nomination. I will try to live up to the expectations of not only the people of Bangladesh but for Pakistan as well and also the entire cricketing fraternity," were Kamal's words in the joint statement.

It was also informed in the press meet that Kamal's name had been decided in October this year though it was learned that both Kamal and Ashraf were called up by the ICC in November during which they were asked to reach a consensus on a name.

If it was decided in October, then how come the ICC asked for the November discussions?

Another important point was the use of both boards' logos. Since the BCB hasn't approved Kamal as its choice, the legality of the press release can also be called into question.

It may also be mentioned here that there hasn't been any government-level discussions on the selection for the ICC role and with two names being talked about, the other being former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, it was a sly tactic used by a vested quarter.

Interestingly, the press meet was closed off after just two questions and none of them were concerning the way PCB just announced Kamal's name.

The onus is now on the BCB directors to make their selection.

Suspect Delwar

FROM PAGE 20

Awami League.

After his arrest, Delwar was placed on 10 days' remand in connection with the killing and four more days for interrogation about the illegal arms. However, before his 10-day remand had finished Delwar gave his confessional statement.

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Poor porcupine

FROM PAGE 20

Later, they took away the dead porcupine, said Halim, owner of a shop near the CU arts faculty.

Contacted, CU proctor Mohamad Nasim Hasan said he knew nothing about the incident.

Sources in CU said some people grow ginger in the hills of the campus. Porcupines often eat gingers and damage their farmlands and to stop that the farmers make traps to catch the animal.

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Philippines Storm

FROM PAGE 20

Cagayan de Oro city reported 215 dead, and nearby Iligan city lost 144 residents, Philippine National Red Cross secretary-general Gwen Pang told AFP.

Iligan mayor Lawrence Cruz described rampaging floodwaters from swollen rivers that swamped up to a quarter of the land area of the city of 100,000.

"It's the worst flood in the history of our city," Cruz told GMA television. "It happened so fast, at a time when people were fast asleep."

The station showed dramatic pictures of a family escaping out of the window of their home in the town as the floods rose, and rescue workers in orange vests shepherding survivors to safety above chest-deep waters.

"Most of them were asleep as floodwaters rushed down at 2:30am (1830 GMT Friday)," Benito Ramos, head of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council told

reporters in Manila, referring to the victims.

"They were warned (about the approaching storm), but they did not go into pre-emptive evacuation."

He said Mindanao was rarely visited by storms, although about 20 major storms strike the Philippines annually, with most hitting Luzon, the largest and most populous island in the Southeast Asian archipelago.

"We expect huge damage, especially on agriculture," Ramos said.

Iligan tourism officer Pat Noel told AFP waters began rising shortly before midnight (1600 GMT Friday) as people slept, sweeping houses made of light materials and their inhabitants along the riverbanks.

"Many of them told me they sought refuge on their rooftops," he said after joining the first wave of rescuers at daybreak.

Two of the three rivers that flow into the port of

3 Pakistani soldiers killed in explosion

AFP, Peshawar

Three Pakistani soldiers were killed yesterday after a bomb planted on a roadside exploded in a northwestern tribal area, security officials said.

The blast took place at Katasari village in restive Kurram tribal bordering in Afghanistan where Pakistani army and paramilitary forces have launched an operation against Taliban militants.

Local intelligence officials suspect the involvement of Taliban militants in the attack.

Pakistan has for years battled homegrown insurgents in the tribal belt that borders Afghanistan. More than 3,000 soldiers have died but Pakistan has resisted US pressure to do more to eliminate havens used by Afghan insurgents.

At an emergency meeting in the evening with Vice Chancellor Dr Salehuddin, the university syndicate declared a 3-day mourning programme from yesterday which includes a procession on the campus at 11:00am today and a condolence meeting at the mini auditorium at 11:30am.

However, the admission process for first year honours classes from the waiting list and other administrative activities will remain open, the official added.

Earlier, students in protest demonstrated on Sylhet-Sunamganj road and kept vehicular movement suspended from 11:30am to 6:30pm. They also set fire to a bus and vandalised two CNG-run auto-rickshaws, police said.

Officer-in-Charge of Jalalabad Police Station Selim Hossain said a group of eight students went on a journey by an engine boat to Chenger Khal, a branch of river Surma, Friday afternoon. On way back, some alleged muggers got into their boat from another boat in Noakandi area.

As the muggers asked them to hand over their belongings, some of the students gave their mobile phones and money, but the others attempted to resist.

Three students jumped into the river to avoid attack. Of them, one managed to swim ashore while Khairul and Dipankar failed, the police officer added.

At one stage, the attackers left the scene when the rest of the students went back to campus and informed the authorities about the matter.

On information, local police and firefighters conducted a search in the area around 11:00pm on Friday but failed to find them due to prevailing darkness.

Local fishermen found the body of Dipankar around 7:30am yesterday in Chenger Khal. Khairul's body was found three and a half hours later at the same place, said Selim.

Police arrested two locals including boatman Gulzar Miah and its owner Atique Miah, said the officer.

Prof Akhtar Islam Chowdhury, head of chemical engineering and polymer science department, said the group had seven students and a cousin of Dipankar.

To look into the matter, the authorities formed a three-member committee with

Prof Zafar Iqbal as its chief and gave it two days to submit report, the vice chancellor announced in the afternoon when the students were demonstrating at the university's main gate.

The other members of the probe committee are Prof Hasanuzzaman Shyamal and Sayon Chakravarty of economics department.

Sylhet city Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, lawmaker Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury and Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police Ejai Ahmed also addressed the agitating students and assured them of trying their best to nab the killers.

Sylhet police chief M. A. B. M. A. B