

International

News Analysis

Timor shooting recalls ghosts of Portugal's colonial past

LISBON (Portugal), Nov 15: When Portuguese of all political colors denounced Indonesia's massacre of protesters in East Timor, their outrage reflected a strong sense of national responsibility towards the southeast Asian colony Lisbon abandoned 16 years ago, reports AP.

"Portugal has a moral, political and historical duty to guarantee the rights of the Timorese people," Ana Nunes of the Lisbon-based monitoring group Peace Is Possible In East Timor said Thursday.

Organizations ranging from the Catholic Church to the Communist Party to the center-right government condemned Tuesday's shooting of dozens of pro-independence demonstrators after a memorial mass in the East Timorese capital of Dili.

President Mario Soares denounced "the repeated acts of growing violence by the occupying forces against the defenseless Timorese population."

The government promised to rally international opinion against Indonesia — gaining immediate success when the European Community denounced the shootings as "a clear contravention of the most fundamental human rights."

Although Portugal is now a vocal defender of East Timor's self-determination, Lisbon stood by in December 1975 when Indonesia invaded the half-island 500 kilometers (300 miles) north of Australia.

Timorese nationalists now praise Portugal's efforts to gain international backing for their cause — as they once complained of indifference from the former colonial power.

"The Timorese people were hit by Portugal's silence but lately ... there has been some hope," Emilia Gusmao, exiled wife of nationalist guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmao, said during a recent visit.

Lisbon was in chaos after the April 1974 revolution led by leftist army officers overthrown a 48-year ultraconservative dictatorship that had clung to Europe's last colonial empire.

By the end of 1975, the five African colonies — Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome Principe were independent under communist government. And East Timor was occupied by Indonesia.

Portugal left an imperial legacy of underdevelopment and instability. After independence long and bloody civil wars broke out in Angola and Mozambique.

Nawaz Sharif govt in deep trouble

JUI leader disowns sex scandal, brothel-owner files writ

ISLAMABAD, Nov 15: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is facing fresh trouble from hardline religious allies following the resignation of a prominent fundamentalist leader from a key party post, reports AFP.

Senator Maulana Sami-Ul-Haq resigned as Vice-President of the ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI) late Wednesday, accompanied by two provincial IJI office-bearers.

The resignation marks a further decline in Sharif's uneasy relations with religious groups in the alliance he led to a huge election victory over former Premier Benazir Bhutto in October 1990.

Sami-Ul-Haq, a 55-year old religious scholar known for his advocacy of a rigid Islamic order, resigned in anger after a flurry of press reports linking him with what was allegedly a top-class brothel discovered by Police in Islamabad.

His resignation coincided with reports that Madame

Tahira, the woman accused of running the brothel, had sought High Court intervention against what she alleged was a press smear campaign.

In a writ, Tahira said remarks attributed to her saying Sami-Ul-Haq had visited a brothel run by her were a "mere concoction."

Sami-Ul-Haq blamed government agencies for implicating him in the scandal, saying people opposed to the enforcement of Islamic Sharia law in Pakistan were behind that he called a vilification campaign.

In a statement, released by his Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) party, Sami-Ul-Haq said he could "no longer hold the post as it was a ... burden on my shoulder," adding the office in Sharif's IJI had become a "stigma."

Being conducted against the fundamentalist leader and orders to the Islamabad administration to punish the perpetrators to the Islamabad

administration to pacify Sami-Ul-Haq.

The JUI leadership would meet soon to decide on future relations with the IJI, he said in a statement issued in Akora Khattak, his home town in North West Frontier Province.

Pakistan's well-organized and influential fundamentalist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, is already at odds with the Prime Minister because of his pro-western stance during the Gulf war.

One Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Ghafoor Ahmed stepped down as IJI Secretary General early this year and has refused Sharif's requests to withdraw his resignation, while the party's chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed continues to criticise the government publicly.

In September, another fundamentalist figure, Agah Murtaza Poya, was expelled from the alliance and his position as its Central Information Secretary for openly denouncing the government and siding with Bhutto.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman, a JUI faction chief, had previously stopped cooperating with the ruling alliance, describing a Sharia Bill the government pushed through Parliament in July as a "mockery."

Sharif, however, has been able to win back Maulana Abdul Sattar Niazi, a veteran religious figure, who quit the cabinet over the Prime Minister's Gulf war policy, but returned in September.

Observers said the growing split with religious partners posed new difficulties for Sharif, who is already under pressure due to a multi-million dollar financial scandal, law and order problems and a fiercely confrontational opposition.

The Prime Minister still enjoys the support of the left wing Awami National Party and Southern Sindh's powerful group, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement. But signs of dissent have started to appear in his own Pakistan Muslim League.

Off the Record

Monkey can do what Jews can't!

JERUSALEM: Israel's former Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef has ruled that trained monkeys may turn off lights or do other domestic chores forbidden to Jews on the sabbath, reports Reuter.

But he wrote in the ultra-religious weekly Yom Hashlosh that only a borrowed monkey - or a dog or other animal capable of performing such tasks - could be used by observant Jews between sunset on Friday and sunset on Saturday. Their own beasts must be allowed to rest, according to religious law.

Japanese eat crows

TOKYO: The Japanese are eating crow. And everybody seems happy about it.

"It tastes quite good," said Seigoro Ikeda, mayor of Kisakata, where someone decided that the best way to counter crop damage by ravenous crows was to turn the tables on them, reports AP.

Officials of the agricultural town on the Japan Sea coast have reported that thousands of crows are responsible for about 7,500 a year in crop damage. The Mainichi newspaper reported Friday.

About three years ago, the town began trapping 150-200 birds per month. idea that we try eating

"We were wondering how we could use the birds effectively and a few people came up with the them," Shigeo Furuta, chief of the town's Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Division, told the newspaper.

Eleven people took part in a taste test earlier this month. They tried to identify a range of meats fried in oil, including beef, fowl, pork and of course crow.

Only four people correctly identified the crow, some even mistaking it for beef, the newspaper reported.

In the true commercial spirit, officials are planning to promote crow meat as a local speciality for yakitori, or Japanese shish kebabs, the Mainichi said.

Another Miyazawa rocks Japan

TOKYO: Fans of Japan's most famous Miyazawa — not the new Prime Minister — scooped up all available copies of a book of nude photographs of the actress on the first day of sales, the book's publisher said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The rush on sales has sent the publisher scrambling to print more copies of the collection of photographs featuring 18-year-old Rie Miyazawa, no relation of Prime Minister Kichii Miyazawa.

All 100,000 copies of the first edition of "Santa Fe" were snatched up on Wednesday, the first day they went on sale, said a spokeswoman for the Asahi Shuppansha publisher.

"The first edition sold out immediately and we're now publishing more books to meet the demand," said the spokeswoman.

Demand for the book was boosted by full-page advertisements in two Tokyo newspapers in Mid-October that featured the model cum actress totally nude for the first time, her hands cupped strategically below her waist.

The publisher has denied that any of the photographs violate Japan's ban on displaying public hair.

An estimated one million people ordered copies of the book, priced at 4,500 yen (35 dollars) through their local book stores, according to reports. The publisher, however, refused to comment.

Bao Bao for love tryst with Ming Ming

BERLIN: Bao Bao, Berlin Zoo's male panda, was en-route for Britain Friday for a love tryst with Ming Ming, the female panda in London Zoo, reports AFP.

Bao Bao, accompanied by his keeper, Lutz Stroemer, will be paired with Ming Ming early next year in an effort to breed, the Berlin Zoo said.

Pandas have a gestation of 97 to 163 days and give birth to only one or two cubs. As with most other zoos, Britain has never had a panda born in captivity. If Ming Ming gives birth, her offspring will eventually be given to Berlin.

Thirteen-year-old Bao Bao, whose name means "little darling," was a present from the former Chinese Communist Party and government Chief Hua Goufeng to the then-Chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, in 1980.



PHNOM PENH: Prince Norodom Sihanouk salutes the jubilant crowd of well-wishers gathered to welcome him at the airport on his return to Cambodia after 13 years of exile. —AFP/UNB photo

Israel provoking Arabs to quit talks: Mubarak

CAIRO, Nov 15: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak charged Thursday that Israel was refusing to negotiate the return of the Syrian Golan Heights to provoke the Arabs into walking out of Middle East peace talks, reports AFP.

"We have to understand Israeli provocation," he told reporters after addressing parliament here.

The decision of the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) concerning the Golan can have no other meaning. They want to hamper the peace process and we, the Arabs, must realise that Israel wants us to withdraw and leave them the victory.

The Knesset earlier this week approved a resolution proclaiming the Golan, captured by Israel in 1967 and annexed in 1981, non-negotiable.



MANILA: Former First Lady Imelda Marcos shakes hands with former rebel priest Conrado Balweg before a meeting. Balweg joined the New Peoples Army, the armed unit of the Communist Party of the Philippines, during Marcos rule and in the meeting with Imelda said it was for all Philippine leaders to show unity. — AFP photo

By-elections in 15 constituencies and 57 regional assembly seats

Rao faces popularity test today

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, trust into power by the killing of former Indian leader Rajiv Gandhi, faces the first popularity test of his government's radical economic reforms on Saturday, reports Reuter.

By-elections in 15 parliamentary constituencies and 57 regional assembly seats will give some hint of how voters view Rao's overhaul of India's economy since his Congress party scraped to power in June.

Faced with a crisis over India's 72 billion dollar foreign debt, Rao has slashed government spending and red tape and welcomed foreign investors in a reversal of the ideal of socialist self-sufficiency adopted at independence from Britain in 1947.

But with two major opposition parties battling for prestige gains, no one — including Congress — expects the government to sweep the polls on a platform of economic austerity measures.

"If they get seven parliamentary seats, they should be very pleased," said one diplomat.

One of the seven should be northern Amethi, where Gandhi won his usual handsome majority on May 20, the day before he was blown up by a woman suicide-bomber at the end of campaigning for general elections which were eventually completed in June.

Rao, who succeeded Gandhi as Congress leader and went on to become India's first unelected Prime Minister, should also win his own by-election in his home state, southern Andhra Pradesh.

So should his Defence Minister, Shrad Pawar. Both are fighting mainly to beat a

six-month constitutional deadline for unelected government ministers to win parliamentary seats.

Elsewhere, Congress is fighting close or losing battles in the Eastern stronghold of a left-leaning alliance headed by former Prime Minister VP Singh and the northern heartland of the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Singh has devoted himself to door-door canvassing for his own Janata Dal party's candidate, Ram Singh, in Amethi — no small feat in the world's most populous democracy, where each of the 545 parliamentary constituencies averages a mil-

lion voters.

Rao, an impassive 70-year-old veteran of Congress back-rooms, had to go to Amethi this week to tug heartstrings with memories of Gandhi, who died at the age of 46 with voters still avid for a glimpse of his internationally-famous features.

"I never thought I would have to come to ask for votes in Amethi," Rao said, praising Congress candidate Satish Sharma as having ensured the constituency's unusual prosperity in his former role as Gandhi's chief election agent.

There is no way the polls can give Rao quite as many

seats as he needs for a majority in parliament, where congress rules with the help of a divided opposition and about a score of supporter among small parties and independents.

So diplomats and political scientists say their main interest lies in how the BJP performs after it made big gains in the general election on the back of a Hindu militant campaign to claim the site of a mosque in the holy town of Ayodhya, some 150 km (100 miles) east of Amethi, both in Uttar Pradesh state.

A peep into Rangoon's nightmare world

Pro-democracy agitation in Burma suppressed ruthlessly

BANGKOK, Nov 15: The Burmese capital, Rangoon, is a city permeated by fear and mistrust, according to two pro-democracy politicians who managed to escape the city and cross into Thailand.

In a rare insight into the nightmare world of pro-democracy activists struggling against Burma's military junta, the two men told AFP of continued arrests and harassment of any one opposing the government.

They revealed how opposition politicians are watched and followed constantly and how the wrong answer to a question could lead to prison and torture.

Aung Moe Zaw and Myint Zaw, both senior members of the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), said po-

litical activity is impossible under the ruling military State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

SLORC is the official name of the junta which grabbed power in September 1988, after the bloody suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon and other towns.

The DPNS's typewriters and duplicating machines have been confiscated, their telephones tapped and mail opened by military intelligence, explained Myint Zaw, who fled Rangoon late last month.

Myint Zaw said people are afraid to talk to each other and often communicate with slips of paper, passing them furtively from hand to hand, even if it is only an article from

a foreign newspaper.

"People were overjoyed when detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize last month but they were unable to express their feelings openly. Some people who talked about it in tea shops were later arrested," said Myint Zaw, who is the chairman of the DPNS.

"Aung San Suu Kyi is regarded as the national leader. People are feeling very bitter and frustrated because she is still being detained by the junta," he said.

While people are afraid to show open support for her, the Burmese have developed apparently innocent yet well-understood signs of showing their feelings, said Aung Moe Zaw.

BRIEFLY

BBC TV service for Asia begins: A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television service will be seen live for 24 hours a day throughout Asia from Friday via a satellite signal to a Hong Kong broadcaster, the BBC said on Thursday, reports Reuter Friday from London.

"BBC world service television now becomes the BBC's first ever 24-hour channel," Huge Williams, Director of Programmes of the year-old service, said in a statement. The news and information channel, with hourly bulletins, will be transmitted by satellite to Star TV in Hong Kong for continuous broadcasting throughout Asia from 0900 GMT on Friday, the statement said.

Oscar-winning Director Richardson dies: Oscar-winning British Director Tony Richardson, a leading filmmaker for 30 years, died on Thursday of aids in a Los Angeles hospital, a spokesman said, reports Reuter Friday from Los Angeles.

Richardson, 63, who died in Saint Vincent's Medical Centre, made a series of hit films, including "Look Back in Anger," "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner," "He Entertainer" and the Oscar-winning "Tom Jones."

Richardson, born in Britain, was one time married to actress Vanessa Redgrave, by whom he had two daughters.

Salvadoran rebels to stop operations: Salvadoran rebel leaders said Thursday their forces would halt all offensive operations as negotiations continue on a peace accord with the rightist government, reports AP Friday from Mexico City.

The high command of the leftist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, or FMLN, said it appeared that agreement on a peace accord is near.

The announcement came at a news conference in Mexico City attended by all five top FMLN commanders. They said the unilateral truce would begin Saturday.

They said their forces would not carry out any offensive actions, would halt all acts of economic sabotage and would refrain from any urban combat.

The commanders said the move is aimed at creating the climate for an accord ending more than 11 years of civil war.

EC envoy ends talks with Yslav leaders: European Community envoy Lord Carrington ended talks with Yugoslav leaders who said they wanted peace in Croatia, but fighting continued in the breakaway republic, reports Reuter Friday from Belgrade.

A cease-fire held long enough in the Adriatic Port of Dubrovnik on Thursday for a relief ship to evacuate up to 3,000 of the city's population but sporadic gunfire was heard later, Croatian radio said.

The Slavija, carrying European Community observers, women children, foreigners and wounded men, docked at the Motenegrin Port of Zelenika to have papers examined by federal authorities.

Mosquito kills 200 Nepalis: A mosquito-borne tropical disease has killed 200 people in southern Nepal in the past one month, an ethnic political party claimed Thursday, reports AP Friday from Kathmandu.

The visceral leishmaniasis disease, known in the Indian Subcontinent as kalaazar, results from mosquito bites. It affects the blood vessels and causes enlargement of the liver and spleen. Death normally occurs if the disease is not treated early.

The reported deaths occurred in the Rauthat district, 70 kilometres (45 miles) south of Katmandu, according to a press statement issued by the Sadbhavana party. The ethnic party is based in a predominantly agricultural region of southern Nepal near the Indian state of Bihar.

Human rights abuses in Iran: Iranian resistance leaders and human-rights advocates complained of widespread and increasing rights violations in Iran and urged the United Nations to condemn abuses there, reports AP Friday from United Nations.

The said on Thursday that despite President Hashemine Rafsanjani's moderate image abroad, repression in Iran is even worse than it was under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Pol Pot's sister-in-law faints when her patron Sihanouk arrived

PHNOM PENH, Nov 15: The doyenne of Cambodia's royal dance troupe fainted on the sun-baked airport tarmac when she revered Prince and patron returned yesterday from 13 years of exile, reports Reuter.

Chea Samy, 73-year-old instructor of Cambodia's graceful classical dances, collapsed as Prince Norodom Sihanouk stepped onto the soil his family has ruled since the 19th century. Five barefoot dancers weighed down by gold-em-

brodered costumes and jewelled headdresses ran to revive their mentor, apparently overwhelmed by the heat and the emotion.

Other dance with frangipani flowers in their hair performed on the battle-pocked tarmac for their Prince.

They included a few who survived the 1975-79 rule of the communist Khmer Rouge. They Khmer Rouge imprisoned Sihanouk, their titular head of state and slaughtered most of the dancers as purveyors of decadent art. Chea Samy, a royal dancer

since she was six, is married to the elder brother of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge chief responsible for the deaths of a million Cambodians.

Her granddaughter placed a garland around the Prince's neck while other dancers threw jasmine blossoms onto the red carpet.

In Sihanouk's entourage was his daughter Princess Bopha Devi, once renowned for her performances of Cambodia's highly stylised ballet.

The dancers will later perform before Sihanouk at his gilded place beside the

Mekong river.

The Prince was chief benefactor of the royal corps de ballet during his reign, when he transformed the centuries-old repertoire by introducing up-to-date dances.

At the airport the dancers performed the fan and flower garland dance — a prayer for peace.

Old women wept for joy and schoolchildren craned their necks for a glimpse of the God-King.

"Our prayers have been answered," said Hou Sim, 60, one of two dozen Buddhist

nuns who sat outside the royal palace waiting for the Prince's return.

Crowds lining the 10-kilometer (six-mile) route from the airport appeared carefully organised, consisting primarily of schoolchildren with cardboard security passes pinned to their white shirts.

"I know he's a king, but I don't know anything else," said a boy who was born not long before Sihanouk fled into exile in 1979 ahead of invading Vietnamese troops.

Excitement nonetheless surged through the ranks

when the Sihanouk came into sight, sitting Prime Minister Hun Sen atop the back seat of a white 1963 Chevrolet Impala convertible loaned by a Thai newspaper.

Tens of thousands of people, lined three-deep along most of the route, cheered and threw open their arms to welcome the Prince, who waved back with both hands and blew kisses.

Chinese-Khmer dragon dancers sprang to life below a giant portrait of Sihanouk in

his younger years. An ethnic Chinese merchant class flourished in Cambodia under Sihanouk's rule, but was ruthlessly persecuted by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, who held power from 1975 to 1979.

A Paris report adds Sihanouk's return "is a great diplomatic event" of major import for Indochina and world peace. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said he said he will be the first foreign minister received by the Prince.

Dumas, whose country co-chaired with Indonesia, the Paris peace conference on Cambodia, was interviewed Thursday morning on Europe 1 radio.

When asked about possible threats to peace from the Khmer Rouge, Dumas said precautions had been taken.

The Khmer Rouge would be disarmed, put into barracks. The arms will be stocked, put under lock and key, and the key confided to UN representatives, he said.