

'Sharia Bill to transfer power from people to clerics'

Benazir says Parliament can't be made subordinate to judges

ISLAMABAD, May 13: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said on Sunday her opposition People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) would oppose a government-sponsored bill to enforce Islamic laws in Pakistan, reports Reuter.

"The Sharia bill is a pretext to denude Parliament of its sovereignty," she said in an interview a day after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government resented an amended bill in the National Assembly (Lower House).

"We are opposed to any Sharia Bill which takes power

from the people and puts it in the hands of a few clerics," she said.

Under the Bill, Sharia, based on the Koran and Sunnah (practices) of the Prophet Mohammad (SM), would become Pakistan's supreme law.

The PDA members on a Parliamentary Committee which studied the Bill issued a dissenting note saying it was unnecessary and should be with drawn.

But Sharif's Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) has big majorities in both Houses of Parliament capable of passing

any legislation. Some of its Allies have criticised the bill.

Fundamentalists say it is too weak and liberals fear it could turn Pakistan into an Iran-like theocracy.

The right-wing Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) Party an IDA ally, has described the bill as "a joke with Sharia" and accused Sharif of not doing enough.

The centrist Awami National Party, which shares the government of North West

Frontier Province with the IDA, said the bill did not protect the present political system and democratic institutions.

Sharif pledged to enforce Sharia during campaigning for the elections last October in which he defeated Bhutto. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan ordered the polls after sacking Bhutto on disputed charges of corruption.

Bhutto said her party would support only "a non-foundationalist, modern, liberal Sharia Bill, which guarantees

men and women alike their rights."

The PDA's objections to the Bill included the transfer of legislative work from parliament to judges, she said.

"After all, tomorrow the judges can declare that parliament itself is unislamic. So we cannot make parliament subordinate to Judges," she said.

"The judiciary has to be subordinate and answerable before parliament as its in other democratic countries."



BASRA: Two Iraqi soldiers near Basra view bodies of Iraqi civilians and soldiers May 12 who were executed by Iranian agents, according to Iraqi military source. — AFP photo

Iraq displays 100 bodies killed by 'Iranian agents'

BASRA (Iraq), May 13: The Iraqi Army Sunday displayed the bodies of almost 100 people who they said had been executed by "Iranian agents" who had infiltrated this southern region to fight Iraqi government forces, reports AFP.

The bodies were laid out under a fierce sun in two mass graves close together about one kilometre (half-a-mile) from the Iranian border east on Basra.

Col Osman Mohammad, the officer-in-charge of the Kut Swadi sector, said the dead were both Iraqi soldiers and civilians who had been taken prisoner by rebels. However he said no identity papers had been found on any of the bodies.

"They were killed by rebels who were fleeing ahead of Iraqi operations," he said. There were no Iraqis among

these saboteurs. They were all Iranian agents."

The bodies, 59 in the first grave and 35 in the second, had been discovered by Iraqi Army patrols April 27 and May 1. Col Mohammad told a group of foreign journalists invited by the Information Ministry to view the mass grave.

They had been killed by a single bullet to the back of the neck very shortly beforehand, he said.

Most of the corpses were blindfolded, had hands tied behind their backs and lay face downward.

Several of them were in an advanced state of decomposition and had been partly eaten by wild dogs.

The Basra region has been the scene since March of violent rebel activity, mainly carried out by Shia groups.

The Iraqi Army retook Basra, Iraq's second city, at the

beginning of the month of April.

"No Iraqi took part in this revolt", Col Mohammad said, adding that saboteurs and Iranian rebels were still in the region at the end of April.

He said the foreign press had not been invited earlier to see the mass graves because it had been intended that the United Nations should visit them first. A UN delegation had come May 3.

The Kut Swadi sector where the bodies were found is in a vast expanse of desert which Iraqi used as a defensive line during its eight-year war with Iran.

Since April 11 foreign journalists have also been shown the remains of 450 Iraqi civilians and soldiers executed at Suleimaniyah, in Iraqi Kurdistan, which was under Kurdish rebel control for three weeks.

Kidnappers win freedom of 4 Maoists in Hyderabad

NEW DELHI May 13: Maoist guerrillas trying to disrupt Indian's general elections won the freedom of four jailed colleagues on Sunday after kidnapping an important politician in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, reports Reuter.

Officials said they feared the Maoists, known as Naxalites, along with militants in Punjab and Assam states, were now poised to unleash further violence in the last phase of campaigning for the polls starting on May 20.

The Maoists stormed the house of a Congress Party member of the State Assembly, Sudhir Kumar in broad daylight in the Andhra Pradesh capital of Hyderabad on Saturday and seized him after killing two aides. The Congress rules Andhra Pradesh.

Four jailed members of the Maoist People's War Group (PWG) were released in exchange for Kumar after the guerrillas threatened to kill him. It was not clear when he would be freed.

"The PWG has demonstrated its power in the state," lawyer K O Kannabhiran, a civil liberties leader, told Reuters by telephone from Hyderabad.

They PWG called last week for a boycott of the elections, saying they were a fraud. "Hunger and poverty can be ended only through protracted armed struggle under the hegemony of the proletariat," it said.

The PWG is the most powerful of about 10 groups of militants allied to the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist, founded in 1969 with the aim of launching a Maoist revolution.

The Naxalites derive their name from Marxist militants who organised a peasant uprising in Naxalbari in the eastern state of West Bengal, ruled by

the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

"We have taken the Naxalite threat as a challenge," said Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Janardhan Reddy.

The state government had asked for paramilitary and police reinforcements to be sent to Naxalite-dominated areas, he said.

PTI reports from Ayodhya:

Nawaz Sharif for polls to decide Kashmiris' future

KARACHI, May 13: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on Sunday India must allow the people of Kashmir to decide their future at the ballot box, reports Reuter.

The writing on the wall should be read by the Indians now, Sharif told reporters, referring to a Muslim revolt in the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India.

India must respect the wishes of Kashmiris to settle its 43-year-old dispute with

the BJP leader, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sunday criticised the former Prime Minister, VP Singh, for not making efforts to resolve the Ram Janambhoomi issue and the Rajiv Gandhi government for making feeble efforts, to solve it.

Addressing an election meeting in Ayodhya, he also lambasted the previous governments for only creating vote banks



Pakistan over the Himalayan region, he said.

"Pakistan, which controls the remaining one-third of Kashmir, says the Kashmiris, most of whom are Muslim, should decide in a UN-mandated plebiscite whether to join Islamic Pakistan or Hindu-majority India.

India, which regards the entire state as an integral part of its territory, has fought two of its three wars with Pakistan over the Kashmir issue.

Pakistan on Saturday rejected an Indian charge that it was sending infiltrators into Kashmir and again proposed neutral monitoring of a military control line in the disputed state.

Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar warned Pakistan on Friday it would pay a heavy price unless it stopped sending infiltrators into Indian-ruled Kashmir.

"The day is not far when the people of Kashmir will decide their future on the basis of their right of self-determination," Sharif said.

Scattered violence marks Nepali polls: 25 Royal troops missing

KATHMANDHU, May 13: Scattered violence left 25 people injured Sunday in Nepal's first multiparty elections in three decades amid a nearly 70 per cent voter turnout, a top election official said, reports AFP.

The chief spokesman of the Election Commission, Achyut Rajbhandari, told a news conference that due to local disturbances repolling would be conducted at 21 polling booths.

He said a total of 25 people were injured in factional clashes across the country but

that nobody died during the day's polling.

He said 60 to 70 per cent of the more than 11 million electorate cast their ballots without incident at the country's 14,789 polling centres in 75 districts but that disruptions occurred at 21 booths in 15 different constituencies.

Thousands marooned in Assam

SILCHAR (Assam), May 13: Flood situation in the Barak valley continued to be grim though the river receded slightly Sunday and the sun came out after 13 days, reports PTI.

Fresh areas of Silchar town were inundated Sunday affecting another 30,000 persons when the embankment of Ghagra river breached at Chata.

Official sources said that about 25,000 persons have taken shelter in 73 relief camps in the town, which has been divided into nine zones to facilitate relief work.

Two Airforce helicopters dropped food packets for the marooned people at Dholai and Bhagabazar circle of Cachar district, where about one lakh flood victims took shelter on roof tops, embankments and other high lands.

He said police were forced to open fire on an unruly crowd led by an extreme left-wing faction of the Nepal Communist Party (NPC) which had boycotted the elections in Pyuthan, west of the capital.

Mr. Rajbhandari said security police arrested two persons who had seized ballot boxes in Pyuthan and said repolling would be held again there in four booths.

Mr. Rajbhandari also said a Royal Army helicopter with 25 persons aboard caught fire and had to make an emergency landing but nobody was killed or injured.

He refused to confirm or deny a report that 25 Royal Army personnel were missing in Pyuthan.

Meanwhile, Haribol Bhattarai, a candidate for the Nepal Congress and former Mayor of Kathmandu, was severely manhandled by unruly members of the NPC over a voting dispute, officials said.

The Parliamentary elections are the first under a new Constitution implemented in November following bloody uprising in the spring of 1990 against the non-party Panchayat system.

Reports from outside the capital said brawls between militants of the Nepal Congress and the NPC, the two main contenders in the elections, accounted for most of the disturbances.

Compulsory service tenure in Soviet Navy reduced

MOSCOW, May 13: The Soviet Parliament cut military service in the Navy from three years to two Sunday and approved an experiment to staff ships partly with volunteers, reports Reuter.

The reduction in the length of compulsory service brings the Navy, founded by Tsar Peter the Great in the 18th century, into line with the Army and Air Force.

Military service has become a major source of discord over the past year with large numbers of young men from separatist republics refusing to serve in the Soviet Forces.

Colonel-General Grigory Krivosheev, Deputy Chief of Armed Forces General Staff, told Parliament the experiment with voluntary service would run from 1991 to 1994.

Under the scheme, ordinary seamen and petty officers in four large naval units will be recruited on a contract system.

Guard gets shock of life after stopping Queen

LONDON, May 13: A security guard got the shock of his life Sunday when he realised the woman driver he stopped was none other than Queen Elizabeth, reports Reuter.

Carl Shimmim flagged down the Queen as she drove into horse trials near her Windsor Castle home, west of London.

"I was under strict orders to make sure no one came into the show without a proper pass," embarrassed Shimmim told the Daily Mirror newspaper.

"When the car pulled up next to me I got a real shock — the Queen was the woman driving," he said after waving the unmarked saloon car into the showground.

"My god, it's Her Majesty," gasped a car park attendant, Buckingham Palace said the Queen often drove herself around the Windsor area.

Indo-Pak army officers' border meet May 16

JAMMU (India), May 13: Senior Indian and Pakistan Army officers have made direct contact and will meet May 16 to discuss a truce to stop more than a week of border shelling in Kashmir, senior defence officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

Army commanders of India and Pakistan had agreed to hold the border meeting May 16 "At a suitable place to be agreed upon mutually to get current mounting tensions and surcharged atmosphere on the border eased", the defence officials said.

The decision to discuss a truce emerged when Indian Army commanders from Kashmir's Kupwara, Tital and Michel sectors of the volatile line of control contacted their Pakistani counterparts across the border by telephone, the officials said here in this winter capital of Kashmir.

They confirmed that the army commander-level contacts were a follow up on direct high-level talks between New Delhi and Islamabad recently, but did not give details.

Kupwara, Tital and Michel were among the border section where Indian and Pakistani troops have waged an artillery duel since May 5 after the Indian side said its troops shot dead 91 people they said were Muslim militants fighting for the secession of Kashmir from India.

Defence officials here however said intermittent border shelling between the two sides in Kashmir, claimed by the two neighbours, was continuing Sunday.

Off the Record

British scientists to live with shark

LONDON: British scientists will spend hours in the water with seven-ton basking sharks as part of a study of the endangered species being launched this week, reports Reuter.

"We went to know more about their sizes and breeding patterns before their worldwide stock becomes dangerously depleted," said Cait Lorecchio, a diver with the seawatch environmental programme who will study the 35-foot (10-metre) long, harmless sharks.

The world's second-largest fish, the only shark found regularly in British waters, is hunted for an enormous liver which produces oils used in high-altitude jet engines.

About 1,000 basking sharks are killed each year and an estimated 100 tons of shark liver oil extracted.

These sharks appear off our coast every summer. But no one knows where they go for the rest of the year. We want to learn enough so a sensible fishing policy can be established, marine conservation society scientist Dr Robert Earl said.

The scientists hope to find out about the sharks' breeding and eating habits and a shark sighting network has been set up in coastal towns around Britain.



KAPUSTIN YAR (Soviet Union): The last of the 600 Soviet SS-20 missiles destroyed here in southern Russia May 12 in accordance with the INF treaty signed in 1987 with the United States. — AFP photo

Elizabeth planning an all-American fun

WASHINGTON: Queen Elizabeth II is planning a little all-American fun on her ninth visit to the United States: she'll meet Norman Schwarzkopf, eat popcorn at a baseball game and remember the Alamo, reports AP.

But the queen's visit also will have a formal side. She'll address Congress — she's the first British monarch to do so — visit a housing project in the nation's capital, tour George Washington's home at Mount Vernon and host a garden party.

Because the queen and her husband, Prince Philip, are the president's guests, the state visit will include a White House dinner and a reciprocal event at the British Embassy.

The closely guarded invitation lists for those parties have kept Washington's social set on tenterhooks for weeks. Bruised egos have already surfaced.

Evangeline Bruce, the doyen of Washington society and the widow David K. Bruce, the former US ambassador to Britain, for example, was excluded from the black-tie sit-down dinner at the embassy.

The queen is using her official trip — she arrives Tuesday for nine days — to get to know America better. After four days in Washington, she'll head to Florida and Texas.

And now noise bombs!

SYDNEY: Australian wildlife officers used noise bombs to scare off a group of killer whales who were feeding on a school of 1,000 dolphins they had trapped in a remote Tasmanian bay, a wildlife officer said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The sea was boiling they (the dolphins) were so agitated, said Roger Aldridge, who sailed his yacht into the bay during the hunt on Saturday.

About 1,000 dolphins entered adventure bay on Bruny Island, off the southern coast of the island state of Tasmania on Saturday afternoon, said local wildlife officer Pat Bortignon by telephone Monday.

The dolphins were chasing a school of Mackerel and the whales herded them into the bay and then just kept patrolling up and down the mouth of the bay, picking off the stragglers, he said.

Local resident Leigh Higgins said whenever the dolphins tried to leave the bay, the nine-metre (30-foot) whales would move in closer and dive among them.

Next superpower summit likely in Moscow

MOSCOW, May 13: The long-delayed superpower summit may be held in Moscow in late June or early July despite lingering arms disputes and a fire that crippled the US Embassy in the Soviet capital, a Kremlin spokesman says, reports AP.

President Mikhail S. Gorbachev wants a summit in Moscow, said his deputy spokesman Sergei Grigoriev, and he is pressing his aides to resolve questions on conventional and strategic arms treaties.

"I think the Americans need a summit, too," said Grigoriev, saying US President George Bush's victory in the Gulf War had been tarnished by subsequent Iraqi attacks against Kurds.

Other Soviet officials have been arguing in recent days that Gorbachev and Bush both could bolster their images by holding a summit. Such meetings usually produce treaties and are accompanied by great fanfare, often being seen as foreign policy successes for

the leaders.

Gorbachev, however, is still smarting from an unsuccessful trip last month to Japan, where government and business leaders refused reforms were needed before a new infusion of foreign aid.

Gorbachev subsequently blamed the US government for pressing the Japanese to turn down the aid request.

Bush and Gorbachev seemed to clear the air on Saturday with a 45-minute telephone conversation in which Bush agreed to send a team of economic advisers in Moscow.

A US economic team, headed by Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard Crowder, is due in Moscow next week to advise the Soviets how to improve their food distribution system. Crowder also will report back to Bush on a Soviet request for 1.5 billion dollars in credits to buy American grain.

All the activity seems to signal that a summit is in the works.

BRIEFLY

Iraq to send pilgrims to Mecca:

Iraq announced that it would send pilgrims on the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca this year despite its Gulf war rift with Saudi Arabia, Reuter reports from Baghdad.

Information and Culture Minister Hamid Yousef Hummedi, quoted by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), said the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs would draw up the necessary travel regulations.

The agency said a cabinet session, chaired by Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, had entrusted the ministry with the task.

Israelis march thru' Jerusalem:

Tens of thousands of flag-waving Israelis marched through Jerusalem's mostly Arab sector on Sunday, marking the 24th anniversary of east Jerusalem's capture and the unification of the city after the 1967 Middle East war, AP reports from Jerusalem.

The nationalist mood of the Jerusalem Day festivities appeared a response to US Secretary of State James A. Baker III's attempts to persuade Israel to trade land for peace with Arab states. That land could include east Jerusalem.

He said Israel "aspires to coexistence, with Arab neighbours, but stressed that Israel would stand fast against pressures to withdraw from east Jerusalem, which Arabs want to make the capital of a Palestinian state.

Iraq returns Kuwaiti Boeing:

Iraq has returned a Kuwait Airways Boeing 727, which it seized after its invasion of the Emirate, to Kuwaiti authorities, Iraqi Airways Director Nouredin al-Safi said Sunday, AFP reports from Nicosia.

He said the airliner was returned last week in good condition with the cooperation of the United Nations and Royal Jordanian Airways, according to the Iraqi News Agency monitored here. Safi also indicated that Iraq would also return six Airbus to Kuwait after their return from Iran, where they were sent during the Gulf war.

17 killed in China explosion:

Seventeen people were killed in an explosion at a firecracker workshop in Central Henan Province, the China Daily said Monday in Beijing, reports AFP.

A further 10 workers were injured in the explosion on May 7, the English-language Daily said, adding that the cause of the blast remained unknown.

The production of fireworks is a major industry in China, and hundreds of millions are sold nationwide, especially around Chinese new year.

Shevardnadze to meet Carter:

Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet Foreign Minister, arrived Sunday for a meeting with former US President Jimmy Carter, AP reports from Atlanta.

Shevardnadze was to meet privately Sunday evening with Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, at the Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta. A private reception honoring Shevardnadze was planned later at the Center, which focuses on international studies and policies.

Carrie Harmon, a spokeswoman for the Center, said no details on the meeting would be released Sunday.

Shevardnadze was scheduled to deliver Monday's commencement address at Emory University, where his granddaughter, Tamara Mosashvili, is a freshman.

Foreign troops hinder peace move:

The presence of foreign troops in Iraq is hindering rather than helping the search for a solution to the refugee problem in the country, Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz said Sunday, after talks with a United Nations envoy, AFP reports from Nicosia.

However, Aziz told Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, who is in Iraq on behalf of UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to discuss the refugee crisis, that Iraq fully supported the United Nations' efforts, according to a dispatch of the official Iraqi News Agency monitored here.

The presence of foreign divisions in certain parts of Iraq, and the exploitation of the refugee problem with the aim of infringing Iraq's sovereignty are hindering the search for a solution to the refugee problem," Aziz was quoted as saying.