

Sharif's third option for Kashmir creates storm in Pakistan

A Star Special from Mariana Baabar

ISLAMABAD, Feb 22: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's statement to BBC in which he has for the first time publicly stated that there is a third option of an independent Kashmir, has created a storm in Pakistan.

Immediately upon his arrival from Qatar, senior Foreign Ministry officials, totally taken aback by this major policy announcement, contacted him. The result was a clarification that Pakistan was committed to the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir in accordance with the UN Security Council's resolutions.

There was no clear-cut contradiction saying that the option of an independent Kashmir would not be sought.

But the very next day, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Siddiq Kanju said, "I categorically say 'no' to an independent Kashmir. I am not for an independent Kashmir at all."

Sharif in his taped interview had said, "I made it very clear that Kashmiris have every

right to decide whether they want to join Pakistan, remain independent or join India."

That there is a division amongst the different tiers of power in Islamabad is clear, because Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali the Minister for Economic Affairs who recently led a successful tour of the central Asian republics said, "The government of Pakistan was fully aware of the implications of self-determination which included the option of an independent Kashmir."

The leader of the JKLF, Amanullah Khan has welcomed Sharif's new policy.

The third option of an independent Kashmir is being considered seriously in various circles in Islamabad where the emergence of this possibility has arisen. A senior government official said, "In politics you cannot rule out any option, and in the final analysis you decide on a policy, in your own interest."

But in public for the time being in spite of Sharif's statement the Foreign Ministry is saying, "There is no major

change in our policy." These sources claim that the pros and cons of an independent Kashmir were being discussed in meetings but they gave reasons as to why Pakistan could not afford to be seen budging from its old stand of calling for the self-determination of the Kashmiris, according to the UN Security Council resolution.

They explain this by saying that India was already seen backing out of the UN resolution and has so far denied the Kashmiris their right of self-determination. They say at this stage Pakistan cannot afford to be seen backing out of this same UN resolution.

Another view is that major world issues are now finding answers at the UN Security Council meetings and Pakistan hopes that Kashmir would also find its way on the agenda there.

Diplomatic sources said that a hint of events to come were evident in Sharif's comments made immediately after the long march of the JKLF to the line of control. Sharif had said

that it was not possible for Pakistan to continuously stop the JKLF marchers from crossing the line of control.



Nawaz Sharif

One diplomat said: "The changing realities in the world and the emergence of new nations have also effected the fight of the Kashmiris. Today it is too late for either Pakistan or India to decide the future of Kashmir."

Amongst the Pakistan military there were mixed feelings on Sharif's statement about an independent Kashmir. Military sources maintain that this will be discussed threadbare at the

annual Corp Commanders' meeting in Rawalpindi starting Feb 24.

In the mean time one view emerging from here is that it is the United States which is dictating the 'independent' theory to the Sharif government. They feel that for the time the US has to be appeased because they have reacted positively to Pakistan's request to sell them military spare parts which the forces drastically need.

But the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) which has monitored both the Afghanistan and Kashmir policies feels that this 'independence' theory is opposed to their line of annexation of Kashmir with Pakistan.

However the national media in Pakistan had severely criticised the manner which Sharif chose to announce such a major policy change abroad to a foreign news agency. The press felt that if a policy shift on Kashmir was on the cards the entire nation had to be first taken into confidence and in the present manner the

coming weeks would see sparks fly off with a major political controversy in the country.

Reuter adds: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is venturing back into Kashmir to try to repair political damage caused by his decision to halt a mass march towards Indian lines that ended in widespread bloodshed, reports Reuter.

A leader of the ruling Muslim conference in Pakistani Kashmir told the official APP news agency on Friday that Sharif would visit the region next Wednesday to boost moral and political support for a Muslim uprising in Indian Kashmir.

He is likely to use a rally in the Azad (free) Kashmir capital Muzaffarabad on Wednesday to try to justify police action to stop the February 12 march in which at least seven people died.

Sharif will also want to clear up confusion over an apparent slip this week when he told an interviewer Kashmiris could opt for independence if they wanted.

The Midnight File

Hezbollah calls off rocket war on Israel

KAFRA (Lebanon), Feb 22: Shiite Muslim guerrillas (Hezbollah) called off their rocket war on Israel today and withdrew from frontline areas in South Lebanon. The decision, taken to avert further retaliation threatened by Israeli checked spiralling violence that gripped the border area for six days after Israeli helicopters killed a fundamentalist leader, reports Reuter.

'Punjab polls a farce'

PANTA, Feb 22: Janata Dal leader, George Fernandes, MP, today described the Punjab polls as farce. "The Congress-I wanted to win the polls, completely ignoring the interest of the state and the country as a whole," he told newsmen here, reports PTI.

Yangon fighting

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The fall of Mawlaik, located along the border with Thailand, would be a major blow to the general anti-Yangon cause. The extensive jungle camp serves as a stronghold for not only the KNU but the political dissidents who have declared a 'parallel government.'

Meanwhile, some 800 kilometers (500 miles) to the northwest, Yangon has moved as many as 90,000 troops to the Bangladesh border, saying it is trying to suppress several Muslim and other insurgent groups in Myanmar's frontier Arakan State.

Fighting has also erupted in recent weeks between the Myanmar army and Naga tribes inhabiting mountains along the remote Indian frontier.

Several thousand Karen have recently sought safe haven in Thailand, adding to the more than 60,000 other ethnic minority refugees in the country. The Nagas are reportedly fleeing into India; some 30,000 Karen refugees remain in China, and in the most dramatic exodus more than 100,000 Muslims have streamed into Bangladesh.

Muslim refugees interviewed claim the Myanmar military is relocating villagers without compensation, destroying mosques and shooting civilians in a campaign to sweep the Muslims out of Arakan.

Similar stories are heard along the Thai frontier, with some of the most chilling from men and women shanghaied by the army to serve as porters. The escapees, aged from 13

to 65, said they had been variously picked up while at work on farms, standing at bus stops and waiting in line at cinemas. Invariably they were not allowed to even return home to pick up clothes or tell their families about what would happen to them.

They talked of having to carry staggering loads on starvation diets, being beaten with rifle butts and tied up like animals at night to prevent escape. Women described being gang raped night after night by the soldiers.

Added to these are reports of torture and imprisonment of political opponents who in 1990 challenged the junta and won a landslide victory in general elections.

Along Myanmar borders the army continues to commit violations of the laws of war (including extra-judicial execution of prisoners of war and persons suspected of helping the insurgents), says a recent report from the New York-based lawyers committee for Human Rights.

Using revenue from selling of oil, lumber and fishing concessions to foreigners, the military has stocked its arsenal with new weapons, most of them from China.

In late 1990, an arms agreement with Beijing began the inflow of jet fighters, naval patrol boats, tanks and other weaponry worth up to \$1.4 billion. Training is also being undertaken by Chinese military advisors.

Some analysts believe that even if the insurgents suffer major reverses, peace is unlikely to return to Burma until a liberal government assumes power in Rangoon.

5 killed, 7 hurt in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

At least five people were killed and another seven injured in three separate road accidents in and around the city in the last two days.

An auto-rickshaw driver, Saydur, 25, was killed and three policemen were injured when the auto-rickshaw turned turtle at Asad Avenue in the city at about 5:30 am Saturday, police said.

CHT people start long march towards capital Wednesday

Tribals and non-tribals of Chittagong Hill Tracts will begin a long march on Monday towards the capital to protest atrocities of the outlawed Shantibahini, reports UNB.

Organised by Chittagong Hill Tracts National Coordination and Peace Council, the marchers from Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban are expected to reach Dhaka on February 26.

Dhaka-Minsk set up diplomatic ties

MINSK, Feb 22: Bangladesh and Belarus signed an agreement in the capital of the republic of Belarus yesterday, establishing diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries, reports BSS.

Chinese woman found dead

By Staff Correspondent

A young female foreign national was found dead in the bedroom of her residence at Uttara Model Town in the city Saturday morning.

The 25-year-old woman named Deng Jing Rong from China had been in Bangladesh as an official of a local garment industry.

She reportedly committed suicide by hanging at her residence, House No-14, Road No-14, Sector-4, Uttara Model Town.

Uttara police recovered the body from the house at about 8:30 am yesterday and sent it to the morgue of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

PM: uplift programme

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Referring to the canal digging programme of her government, Begum Zia said people's support was necessary for increasing agricultural production for achieving self-sufficiency in food.

She called upon the people to take part in the development programmes initiated by her government and thus boost production in all sectors of the economy. "Democracy has been established, now all of us are to work hard and untidely for quick economic emancipation."

The Prime Minister said women who constitute half of the country's population should take part in nation building activities and make them self-reliant.

BSS adds: Dwelling on the local issues the Prime Minister said the development activities which were initiated by president Ziaur Rahman for the improvement of condition of the inhabitants of Dinajpur would be completed in phases.

She said the construction work of Dinajpur Medical

The driver succumbed to his injuries when he was being taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). The policemen were given first aid at the Rajarbag Police Hospital, said police.

Abdul Hossain, a motorbike rider, died on the spot when he swerved to save a pedestrian on the airport road near Tejgaon police station at about 11 am Saturday.

Our Gazipur Correspondent reports: Three persons were killed and four others injured when a brick-laden truck skidded off the Dhaka-Tangail highway near Chooydana area under Gazipur district Friday morning.

All of the victims were labourers. The three bodies were sent to the Gazipur Sadar hospital morgue and one of the injured persons was admitted to Tongi Hospital.

4 killed while breaking ship

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 22: At least four persons were killed and 20 others injured Saturday at the Khaja Amir shipyard at Sitakunda when a big chunk of broken ship fell on them, as they were engaged in ship breaking.

Three persons died on the spot and the other at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Of the injured 10 were admitted to the Sitakunda Upazila Health Complex and the rest to the CMCH.

Police and Fire Service rushed to the spot immediately after the accident and rescued the injured persons from under the heavy metallic load.

The workers in the area staged demonstration demanding compensation for the dead and injured workers from the owner of the shipyard.

West Bengal Law Minister arrives

A four-member Indian team, led by West Bengal Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Gayyum Mollah arrived Dhaka yesterday on a week-long official visit.

Talking to BSS at the Zia International Airport, the minister said the visit of the team was aimed at familiarisation with the use of Bangla in judicial business here.

College would start as soon as possible. She said the Dinajpur bus terminal and by-pass road would be constructed to fulfil the long standing demand of the local people.

She said the government would utilise khas lands and derelict ponds for solving unemployment problems in the rural areas of Dinajpur.

On her way back to the capital, Begum Zia landed at Jatpurhat where she inaugurated re-excavation of 10-kilometre long Pechulia-Khaschira canal at Dholahar.

Later addressing a rally at Mugabari Degree College ground, the Prime Minister issued a stern warning against terrorism: "None will be spared, even if he belongs to our party."

Presided over by Advocate Abu Yusuf Mohammed Khalilur Rahman the rally was also addressed by Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman Patal, Deputy Minister for Health Serajul Huj, Gholam Rabbani MP and Alamgir Kabir MP.



Wreckage of the truck that skidded off the Dhaka-Tangail Road in Gazipur yesterday.

— Star photo

Vow to translate martyrs' dreams

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noon on behalf of the party. She also conducted an oath at the Shaheed Minar compound after laying wreath where the Awami League leaders and workers pledged to implement the ideals of Bangabandhu and uphold the spirit of the historic Language Movement.

Sheikh Hasina was accompanied by Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad MP, Tofael Ahmed MP, Sajeda Chowdhury MP, Abdur Razzak MP, Amir Hossain Amu and Mozaffar Hossain Paltu.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) laid wreaths at the Shaheed Minar at about 11:30 am. Barrister Salam Talukdar, Secretary General of the party, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed, Dhaka City Mayor Mirza Abbas, Farida Hasan and Begum Sarwari Rahman and others were present.

Five-party alliance leaders laid wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar at about 10:30 am. The leaders present were Rashid Khan Menon MP, Hossain Huj Inu, Nirmal Sen, Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan, AFM Mahbul Huj, Sharif Nurul Ambia and others.

Earlier in the morning the components of the alliance, Workers Party, JSD (Inu), BSD (Khaleq) and United Communist League placed wreaths separately at the Shaheed Minar.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), National Awami Party, Ganotantri Party, Gano Azadi League and Bangladesh Janata Dal also placed wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar Friday morning to pay tribute to the martyrs of the historic Language Movement.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) and Jatiya Press Club placed wreaths at the Shaheed Minar after midnight Thursday.

The Jatiya Party of ousted president Ershad did not have any programme for placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar. However, a procession of the party's student wing Sangrami Chhatra Samaj placed wreaths at the foot of the Shaheed Minar at 1:38 am Friday. The students also chanted slogans.

In the morning of the Ekushey, thousands of people wearing black badges streamed into the Central Shaheed Minar near the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They carried wreaths, bouquets and buds for the heroes of the Language Movement — Salam, Barkat, Rafiq and Jabbar and others — sang "Amar bhaier rakta rangano Ekushey February... aami ki bhulite par..."

Mourners also lined up at the mazzars of martyrs at Azampur graveyard to offer

prayers for the peace and salvation of the departed souls.

Men, women and children thronged the Bangla Academy premises and the Dhaka University campus where programmes took place simultaneously.

The month-long book fair organised by Bangla Academy became the focus of all attention where thousands of people gathered. Loudspeakers blared patriotic songs and poetry recitals all the day.

Bangla Academy organised a discussion on "Ekushey February and the Democratic Movement" and poetry recital session of the eminent and budding poets of the country.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Nazrul Institute, Nazrul Academy, Shishu Academy and Islamic Foundation also organised special programmes in observance of the day.

The other socio-political, cultural, professional and student organisations placed wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar were: Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Central Command Council, Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad's Dhaka City Command, Muktiyoddha Sangsad Jubo Command, Muktiyoddha Sangsad Shishu-Kishore Command, Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association, Dhaka Ainjibi Samity, Awami Jubo League, Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, Jatiyatabadi Karmachari Union, Jatiyatabadi Sechhasebak Dal, Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal, Jahangirnagar University Teachers Association (JUTA), Bangladesh Shikshak Samity, Jibanbima Employees Union, Bangladesh Marshal Arts Association, Bangladesh National Hindu Party, Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A), Bangladesh Chhatra League (N-S), Bangladesh Chhatra Maitree, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Bangladesh College of Leather Technology, Titumir College Students Union, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Bangladesh Biman Employees Union, BCIC Employees Union, Sir Salmullah Medical College Students Union, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Sramik Federation, BISC Sramik Karmachari Union, Bulbul Lalitakala Academy, Dhaka City Theatre, Bangladesh Jatra Shilpa Unnayan Sangstha, Bangladesh Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Amra Mujib Sena, Aat-e-Falgono Sangskritiko Goshthi, Shapla Kuri, Kendrio Khelaghar Ashar, Bangladesh Bastuhara Kalyan Parishad, Kendrio Khelaghar, Zia Shishu-Kishore Sangathan, Arant Jatiya Shishu-Kishore Sangathan, Muktiyoddher

UNHCR official

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mission, told The Daily Star on Saturday that it expects to complete its assessment report by end of this week.

"We will start preparing our report Sunday and we hope to complete it by end this week," he said.

The report will form the basis of an appeal for international help.

Patrick de Souza, head of the mission, has also visited the refugees, many of them sheltered in five camps opened by the government. But most refugees are still scattered along the rugged region.

The team has briefed the foreign missions in Dhaka about the conditions of the refugees.

"The western countries have responded positively to the plight of the refugees," Wjeratine said.

Diplomatic sources in Dhaka said international aid would not be a problem since all western countries are ready to help the refugees.

Representatives from almost all western diplomatic missions in Dhaka have already visited Cox's Bazar district to see the condition of the refugees and assess their needs, the sources said.

The western aid will start coming after Bangladesh and the UNHCR make a joint appeal for help," said a diplomat on Saturday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile UNB says, the Burmese government Friday accused foreign media of "exaggerating and fabricating" reports on tensions surrounding Burmese Muslim refugees fleeing to Bangladesh.

Thousands of refugees have crossed the border in the past few months, alleging persecution by Burmese authorities.

Teachers

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facing the teachers and employees of non-government educational institutions the Prime Minister also directed the Education Ministry to look into the problems and recommend necessary measures after due scrutiny.

The leaders of the Liaison Committee called upon the non-government teachers and employees to resume their duties immediately.

The leaders of the Liaison Committee and Educational Institutions Employees Federation who attended the meeting included Chairman Bangladesh Shikshak Samity Federation Sheikh Amanullah, President of Bangladesh Shikshak Samity Md Kamruzzaman, President of College University Shikshak Samity Dr Akhtaruzzaman, President of Bangladesh Shikshak Pratishthan Karmachari Federation Prof Asadul Huq and Shikshak Samity General Secretary Hena Das.

State Minister for Education Principal Yunus Khan, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Jahannara Begum and Dr Moyn Khan MP were present on the occasion.

BSS adds: Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury Friday urged the country's intellectuals, scholars and competent persons to involve themselves directly in politics instead of criticising the politicians.

He was addressing a discussion meeting on "Ekushey February and Democratic Movement" organised by the Bangla Academy in its premises.

Prof Chowdhury said it would not be besting for the intellectuals and scholars only to criticise the politicians keeping themselves away from politics. They should not only limit themselves to issuing statements and writing articles, Prof Chowdhury said.

The Deputy Leader said: "One cannot be a democrat unless one has regards for other's opinions.

He also addressed a rally of freedom fighters at Tungipara.

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