

Rao defeats move to remove him as party chief

SURAJKUND, Mar 27: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao received an overwhelming vote of confidence from his Congress (I) Party here Saturday, defeating moves by opponents to remove him as Party leader, reports AFP.

Delegates to a two-day national convention of India's ruling party passed a resolution backing Rao by a show of hands after a campaign to oust him as President of India's ruling party failed to garner much support.

Party dissidents had been demanding that Rao step down as party president so that he could concentrate fully on his duties as prime minister and counters the challenge posed by a rise in Hindu fundamentalism.

The one-sentence resolution passed by the 800-odd delegates to the session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) affirmed that the "one man, one post principle shall not apply to the Congress president and prime minister."

Ten senior Congress (I) leaders, including six former ministers, launched a hunger strike in this resort town south of New Delhi on Saturday to demand that the 71-year-old Rao give up the party presidency.

Dinesh, Pawar

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The spokesman said he was confident that if the suspects were on Pakistan territory they would be tracked down and arrested.

PTI says: India has told Pakistan of "serious implications" of not cooperating in locating and handing over six members of the Memon family, the main suspects behind the Bombay blasts now reported to be in Karachi, according to the External Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh.

The minister told Rajya Sabha on Mar 24 the Pakistan ambassador in Delhi had been summoned to the Foreign Office and conveyed India's concern over the issues.

Dinesh Singh said the ambassador had conveyed the Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's assurance that his government would cooperate in tracking down the culprits if they were in Pakistan.

The Minister said there was a conclusive proof of the alleged culprits being in Pakistan saying they had travelled from Dubai to Karachi by a scheduled Pakistan International Airlines flight, PK 214.

Dinesh Singh said the flight of alleged blast culprits to Pakistan was "further proof" of Pakistan's involvement in state sponsored terrorism.

He informed the House that the US administration had already put Pakistan on watch list before identifying it as a terrorist state.

Independence Day

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cluding Communist Party of Bangladesh, Five Party Alliance, Patriotic Democratic Forum, Janata Dal, Nirmul Samannaya Committee, Bangladesh Democratic Forum and a number of students organisations also placed wreaths at the Smriti Shoudha.

The parties and organisations also held seminar and discussions in observance of the day.

In the afternoon, President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Begum Biswas hosted a reception at the Bangabhaban on the occasion.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia attended the reception. Among others, Ministers, leaders of political parties, Jatiya Sangsad members, chief of three services, members of diplomatic missions, intellectuals, litterateurs and high civil and military officials attended the reception.

Some crippled freedom fighters were also present.

Islamic Foundation held Quran Khwari on the occasion and a special prayer was offered at the Baitul Mokarram National Mosque after Juma prayer, seeking divine blessings for peace, progress and prosperity of the country.

Improved diets were served among hospital patients, the inmates of children homes and prisons.

Bands of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Bangladesh Rifles, police, anar-VDP, and fire brigade played on their instruments at different important points on the occasion.

Discussions and symposiums were held by different socio-cultural and political organisations, highlighting the

significance of the day. In the evening, important public and private buildings were tastefully illuminated.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh put up day-long special programmes outlining the significance of the day.

Ships of Bangladesh Navy were kept open for the members of public at Chittagong, Khulna and Mongla Ports and at Sadarghat in Dhaka, BIWTA Ghat at Narayanganj and Barisal.

The day was a public holiday. The Independence and National Day was also celebrated in the port city of Chittagong and elsewhere with a renewed pledge to consolidate the independence and national sovereignty and democracy in the country.

The day was heralded with playing of a five-minute whistle at one minute past 12 midnight at Chittagong Port and a 21-gun salute at the Court Building simultaneously.

In Khulna, the Independence and National Day was observed in a befitting manner. Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, Shaikh Razaque Ali attended the programmes. The highlights of the day-long programmes included exhibition of indigenous goods at the premises of Khulna BSCIC office.

Seminars, symposiums and discussions were also held, highlighting the significance of the day.

In Rajshahi and Barisal Divisional Headquarters the day was observed in a befitting manner.

[More stories on Metro pages]

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Eid congregation at the National Eidgah in city Thursday. — Star photo

Hasina condemns police assault on Nirmul supporters

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday condemned the repressive action of the law enforcing agencies to foil the rally of the Ghatok-Dalal Nirmul Committee in front of Engineers Institution on Friday, reports UNB.

In a statement to the press the Awami League chief regretted the independence loving people who came to the rally were lathicharged and tear gassed. Even the leaders of the Nirmul Committee were not spared, she added.

It was a planned attack on the independence loving people on the Independence Day, said Sheikh Hasina, which manifested that the BNP government is engaged in heinous conspiracy with the anti-liberation forces.

She further said the government has openly sided with the anti-liberation forces and taken the responsibility of protecting them from the wrath of the people and rehabilitating them.

The activities of the government have amply proved that it was engaged in establishing the anti-independence Pakistani line, said the Awami League chief, and appealed to the people to stand united against such a heinous conspiracy.

Ministers, MPs, political

Eid celebrated

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Besides, congregations were also held in different mosques, and Eidgahs in the city. In many areas prayers could not be held an open places due to inclement weather.

The government had declared a three-day holiday on the occasion beginning Wednesday.

Special prayers were offered at all Eid congregations seeking divine blessings for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the country and solidarity and brotherhood of the Muslim Ummah.

On the Eid Day national flag was hoisted atop all public and private buildings. Main roads and road islands from airport to Bangabhaban were tastefully decorated with national flags, festoons and banners inscribed with 'Eid Mubarak' both in Bangla and Arabic.

Inmates of jails, hospitals, orphanages and destitute homes were served with improved diets on the occasion.

In the morning, President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia held receptions at Bangabhaban and Sugandha respectively on the occasion of holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

They exchanged Eid greetings with cross section of people, diplomats and their spouses and representatives of UN organisations.

Ministers, MPs, political

War criminals

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committee are Shawkat Osman, Poet Shamsur Rahman, Justice Debesh Chandra Bhattacharjee, Justice KM Sobhan, Barrister Shaifq Ahmed, Dr Khan Sarwar Morshed, Air Vice-Marshal (Retd) Sadruddin, Prof. Anupam Sen, Prof. Khalid and Salauddin Yousuf MP.

The commission was announced at a press briefing on the street in front of the Samannaya Committee office (JSD-Inu office) instead of at the planned rally scheduled near the Engineers Institute which could not be held due to police action.

Announcing the Commission convener of the committee Jahanara Imam urged the people to submit documents against anti-liberation elements by November 15 to it.

The eight other persons to be investigated for their role during the Liberation War are Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, Maulana Abdul Mannan, Maulana AKM Yousuf, Kamruzzaman, Abdul Kader Mollah, Ali Ahsan Al-Mujahidi KSP leader SM Solaiman and NDP leader Anwar Zahid.

Jahanara Imam said that the committee had given a year to implement the verdict of people's court against Golem Azam and urged to constitute a tribunal to try other war criminals but the government ignored it and harassed committee supporters forcing them to form the Public Commission.

She said that the government exposed its 'autocratic attitude' by foiling the meeting and repressing the committee leaders and supporters.

Imam said that their campaign would continue despite government repression. This government was favouring the anti-liberation forces, she alleged.

Abdur Razzak MP who also addressed the briefing said that the committee would stage a sit-in near the secretariat April 20 and organise demonstrations at every meeting of the Prime Minister from May 4 if the demands were not fulfilled.

Committee leaders Hassan Imam, Poet Shamsur Rahman, Barrister Shawkat Ali, Dr Khan Sarwar Morshed, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Sharif Kabir, Mamunur Rashid, Colonel (Retd) Osman Chowdhury were also present at the briefing.

Floods in Ctg

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time. However, the flood water began to recede after 11 am with the stoppage of rainfall.

Chittagong Met office sources said, rainfall here was recorded at 93 mm in the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the telecommunication that was snapped by a thunderbolt on Eid Day was restored yesterday.

Earlier, Chittagong was completely isolated from the rest of the world on Thursday for about 16 hours as T&T microwave here totally collapsed due to thunder, official sources said.

The Television relay service here from Dhaka was also snapped during that time and as a result, the people of Chittagong could not view the TV special programme on the occasion of Eid festival.

Hundreds of queries about non-operation of TV service here from the curious people poured into T&T office.

T&T sources said the NWD and ISD phones from Chittagong could not operate as the microwave link totally collapsed. The thunder damaged the transformer, and all other equipments at the Kumira Microwave Station, 20 miles off the city, the sources added.

The trouble began at 1:30 pm on that day and the communication was restored after 16 hours at 5:30 am yesterday through a temporary arrangement with the help of a generator, the General Manager of T&T here Alauddin Ahmed informed.

The TV relay service also resumed from 8 am yesterday. Meanwhile the repair works at the damaged Kumira Microwave Station continued, Ahmed also informed.

One killed as train knocks concrete mixer

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 27: One Eid shopper was killed and another 20 injured here Wednesday afternoon when a passenger train knocked a concrete mixer placed close to the rail track and flung it on a track-side Eid market.

Salam, 22, died instantly being hit by the concrete mixer which was dashed by the Dhaka-bound train at about 4 pm on March 24 near the number one rail gate in Narayanganj town.

Three seriously wounded victims of the accident were sent to the Orthopaedic and the Dhaka Medical College Hospital while others were admitted at the Narayanganj Hospital.

RDX explosives are believed to be used in the 13 explosions in Bombay on March 13 which killed over 300 people and injured more than 1,000.

Delhi cancels

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It said an Indian request for Pakistan's assistance was conveyed on March 23, six days after the suspects were reported to have fled Dubai.

Xinhua adds: The city police of Bombay seized nearly 1,500 kilograms of explosives in a vacant flat at Mumbra near the southwestern business metropolis Friday, a report reaching here today said.

The explosives, most of which RDX, were packed in a total of 41 gunny bags that smelt of fish and stored in a round floor flat, the reports said.

The Midnight File

Avalanches kill 24 in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Mar 27: At least 24 people were killed when avalanches swept through villages in the mountainous region of Skardu in northern Pakistan, state-run Pakistan television reported here today. The avalanches hit the villages of Gultari and Mani Das Tuesday and Wednesday, killing 24 people, including three women and six children, and injuring eight seriously, it said. The incident followed two days of heavy rains, reports AFP.

ME talks: Arabs meet in Damascus today

DAMASCUS, Mar 27: Israel's main Arab rivals meet in Damascus Sunday to decide whether to resume negotiations with the Jewish state next month, or reject Washington's invitation and risk the collapse of the Middle East peace process. The two-day meeting — at the foreign ministers' level — will bring together representatives of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The heads of their negotiating teams also will attend, reports AP.

Yeltsin asks Congress to drop new bid to remove him

MOSCOW, Mar 27: President Boris Yeltsin asked Congress today to drop bold new attempts to remove him from office, calling on deputies to instead entrust him and three other interested parties with solving Russia's political crisis within a week, reports AFP.

Nirmul supporters

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and collaborators of 1971 independence war) at 3.25 pm to attend the meeting where a "public probe commission" was scheduled to be announced.

"Please don't proceed, you have no permission to hold any meeting," Mustafaiz, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) told the Committee leaders.

"Show us the order of let us go" Jahanara Imam, Convener of the Committee told the police officer.

During the altercation another police officer Malek ordered his forces to "cordon" the leaders and the constables pushed and forced them to retreat.

Parveen Anwar, Bangladesh representative of the New York-based WTN Television and journalist Baby Maudud of the Daily Itifaaq were prevented from the attending a press briefing by Imam on the street in front of the GPO.

Within an hour of the Committee leaders' being stopped on the street, several thousand Committee supporters gathered in the area and started pelting stones at police and clashed in and around the Stadium, Baitul Mokarram, Bangabandhu Avenue and Zero Point leaving more than 60 injured. The roads in the areas were littered with broken bricks and sandals.

Police lobbed tear gas shells on demonstrators at Tophkhana Road.

The committee sources claimed that more than 200 of their supporters were injured in the hour-long police action.

Tuhin, a Dhaka University student was piked up during the incident was released afterwards.

Witnesses said that more than 1,000 riot police backed by armed police and BDR men were deployed from Gulistan to Shahabag areas via Engineers Institute to maintain order as the Committee announced to celebrate the 1st anniversary of the People's Court which tried Golem Azam for his alleged war crimes during the 1971 Liberation War.

The committee leaders were also harassed when they tried to return home at around 5:30 pm, witnesses said adding that Imam was forced to take a babytaxi to leave the place and was not allowed to walk along the road.

MP Razzak and other leaders left the spot after Imam's departure.

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Tornado

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UNB adds: Hail-storm accompanied by rains that swept over Feni and the adjoining region in the early hours Saturday disrupted normal life in the town and elsewhere in the district.

Standing IRRR paddy and Kharif-crops on a vast area were affected by the hail-storm which hit five Thanas of the town.

UNB Correspondent from Sirajganj adds: the district experienced similar hail-storm in the last two days. The storm damaged onion and garlic on a vast tract of farmland in the district.

50 drowned

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caught by cyclonic storm in the mid-stream of the river Friday near Sirpur and sunk.

Kibria said that more bodies were expected from the hull of the launch when it would be completely salvaged.

Allout search operations were being carried out by special squads to trace out those passengers still missing.

PM shocked

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed her profound grief at the loss of lives in a launch capsized near Sirpur in Barisal on Friday, reports BSS.