

Fresh riots in new areas of Manipur

NEW DELHI, May 6: Hindu-Muslim clashes broke out in new areas of Manipur Thursday as soldiers fanned out across the far eastern frontier state where unprecedented violence has left 115 people dead, PTI said, reports AFP.

Federal Internal Security Minister Rajesh Pilot, who flew into Manipur Thursday, said troops had powers to deal with rioters and insurgents.

The army has taken up position at 3:30 pm (1000 GMT) and anyone found indulging in violence will be sternly dealt with," PTI quoted the minister as saying in state capital Imphal.

New Delhi has also rushed paramilitary reinforcements to Manipur from Assam, the principal state in India's remote northeast, officials said here.

"More deployments will be made if necessary," said an official from the central reserve police force, which has a contingent of its elite anti-riot troopers standing by.

PTI said despite the troop deployment, Hindu-Muslim rioting spread to a new district in the Manipur valley Thursday where arsonists torched 70 homes.

The attacks occurred in three villages in Bishanpur district, PTI said, adding a shop in Imphal's deserted city centre was set on fire by rioters.

Pilot blamed local police and the state administration for failing to control the rioting, saying police were four hours late in reaching some areas after the outbreak of violence.

He said he would inform Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao of the situation.

Imphal and the district of Thoubal have been kept under a curfew since the outbreak of clashes Monday.

Police have also clamped an indefinite curfew in parts of Bishanpur, the third district in the Manipur valley to be gripped by bloody rioting, PTI said.



Bangladesh Prime Minister and SAARC Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia speaks before the closed coffin of slain President R Premadasa in Colombo yesterday. —AFP photo

Premadasa

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a suspected Tamil separatist walked up to him during a May Day parade and detonated explosives strapped to his body.

Tens of thousands of mourners, many carrying umbrellas to ward off a fierce sun, marched slowly ahead of the coffin as it was borne from the palace on a truck topped by a golden canopy.

As many again gathered at the funeral site while others watched the procession on roads decorated with white streamers and posters of the slain President.

Mourners carried banners, pictures and cardboard cutouts of Premadasa. "Premadasa: Friend of the poor. You are immortal," one banner said.

Vehicles equipped with loudspeakers accompanied the marchers, broadcasting praises to the man who had ruled this island nation since January 1989.

In a brief oration, Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, praised Premadasa as an outstanding son of Sri Lanka.

Premadasa's widow Hema, in an emotional funeral oration, vowed to continue her slain husband's policies and urged Sri Lankans to shed their differences and unite.

Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, who has been serving as acting President and is expected to be confirmed as head of state by parliament tomorrow, called for calm in the wake of the death.

"The greatest tribute we can pay to him is for all Sri Lankans to live in unity and brotherhood irrespective of all differences, in conformity with the principles he valued," he said.

Ahead of the funeral Wijetunga ensured the population that "all precautions" had been taken to prevent any reprisals against the minority Tamil community by members of the Sinhalese majority.

Thousands of Tamils have fled their homes here fearing a backlash in the wake of the assassination.

The authorities imposed an 8:00 pm to 5:00 am curfew to thwart any violence. Officials said many mourners were dissuaded from attending the funeral because of the curfew.

Premadasa's coffin was taken over by the military just outside Independence Square, which celebrates the independence of then-Ceylon from Britain in 1948, and transferred to a gun carriage for the journey to the funeral pyre.

State-run television devoted live coverage to the entire proceedings, which lasted nearly nine hours.

Saffron-robed Buddhist monks chanted prayers at the cremation site to invoke blessings on Premadasa, a Sinhalese Buddhist.

Police have said the assassination was carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the most powerful of the groups seeking to carve out a Tamil homeland in the north and northeast of the island.

Premadasa's assassination came just eight days after opposition leader Lalith Athulathmudali was gunned down here during an election rally in an attack which police have also blamed on the Tigers.

Xinhua adds: A number of documents in the possession of the suspected assassin of President Premadasa have been recovered by Colombo police.

The documents include letters written in Tamil which the police believe will provide a useful clue leading to uncovering the assassination plot.

The suspected killer who was arrested by Colombo police on Tuesday has been identified as a 23-year-old Tamil rebel named K Veerakumar, according to some reports here.

Police believe that prior to the assassination of President Premadasa, the suspected assassin had met a key official of the LTTE and had received instructions about the operation.

Khaleda : South Asia

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Begum Zia said "we are gathered here, not just to mourn a leader, whose demise has left a gaping void. We have collected here to salute a martyr whose legacy will be enshrined in our hearts forever."

President Ranasinghe Premadasa's achievements will no doubt stand the test of time, she said.

The Prime Minister said she had come to the state funeral in two capacities, as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, whose government and people will always warmly recall President Premadasa as a good and trusted friend, and as the current Chairperson of SAARC, carrying forward the torch of leadership that was so gloriously held by him (Premadasa) until recently.

Begum Zia said "I have no words to console Madam Hema Premadasa at this hour of her grave sorrow. I grieve with her. I grieve with Sri Lankan people and grieve with the

people of South Asia. "But let us now take a pledge to turn this grief into strength. President Premadasa would have wanted us to do this."

The funeral was addressed, among others by, Acting President of Sri Lanka D B Wijetunga and the secretary to the President read out a message of former Sri Lankan President Junius Jayewardene on the occasion.

Begum Zia arrived here from Dhaka this morning to attend the funeral. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Harold Herat received her at the Colombo airport. Bangladesh High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury was present.

The Prime Minister is accompanied by Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, Energy Minister Mosharruf Hossain, and Anwara Habib MP.

Begum Zia is scheduled to return home late tonight.

Strike paralyses Srinagar

SRINAGAR, May 6: Kashmiris shut their businesses and took vehicles off the streets Thursday in a gesture of solidarity with rebellious state police officers who called a general strike, reports AFP.

Police sources and residents said the shutdown called evoked an impressive response across the entire Kashmir valley, troubled by a bloody four-year-old Muslim secessionist campaign.

Shops and businesses were shuttered and no traffic plied in Srinagar city and other parts of the valley, but a majority of the 15,000 strong police forces in the region were at work.

The underground Kashmir Police Coordination Committee called the general strike to press demands for action against a federal officer it blames for the death last month of a constable allegedly killed by paramilitary troops.

It also wants union rights and the release and reinstatement of nearly 500 policemen arrested or sacked for suspected links with Muslim militants.

State police chief Balwinder Singh Bedi was not impressed by the popular response to the general strike call. "Such tactics will yield no results as all the policemen except a few have joined back their duties," Bedi said.

Police walked off their jobs on April 22 in an action sparked by the death of constable Riaz Ahmed, who was allegedly killed by paramilitary border guards after being detained for suspected links with secessionists.

The Indian army crushed the rebellion six days later, disarming and arresting the militant policemen. Seventy-nine police officers were dismissed Wednesday for "fomenting trouble and several acts of indiscipline."

The strike followed simmering friction between the Muslim majority Kashmir police force and federal troops deployed in thousands to fight Muslim militancy.

OIC calls for use of force in Bosnia

JEDDAH, May 6: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) called today for immediate military intervention in Bosnia after the self-styled Bosnian-Serb parliament refused to endorse an international peace plan, reports AFP.

OIC Secretary General Hamid Algabid called upon the United Nations Security Council "and all the parties that had deferred their plans for military intervention... to intervene immediately" to force the Serbian side to end the fighting and attacks on Muslims.

He also urged the Security Council "to impose the unconditional implementation of the (Vance-Owen) peace plan which has already been accepted by the Muslim and Croat sides."

Algabid charged that UN credibility would be undermined in case of non-intervention.

One commits suicide in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A Bangladesh Bank staff, Badal Chandra Dutt 35, committed suicide in the capital Thursday.

On an information police rushed to Badal's apartment at the Bangladesh Bank staff quarters at Motijheel early in the morning, recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Police said Badal, a personal assistant to a general manager of Bangladesh Bank, had hanged himself from a ceiling fan in his bedroom.

Khaleda calls on Wijetunga, consoles Hema

COLOMBO, May 6: Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today called on acting President of Sri Lanka Dingiri Banda Wijetunga at the President's Secretariat, reports BSS.

During the call the Prime Minister and SAARC Chairperson reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to always stand by the side of Sri Lanka. She said "at the hour of bereavement I am here on behalf of the people of Bangladesh to share the sorrow of hundred crore people of SAARC as its chairperson."

The Prime Minister recalled the recent visit of late Premadasa to Bangladesh which she said would remain ever fresh in the memory of the people of her country.

The Acting President described the killing of President Premadasa very unfortunate and thanked Bangladesh for its resolution to stand by Sri Lanka at the hour of need.

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Khondoker Mosharruf Hossain and Anwara Habib MP were present on the occasion.

Another report says, the Prime Minister visited Hema Premadasa, wife of the slain President at the President's House here today.

The Prime Minister spent some time with the members of the bereaved family of the late President. The son and daughter of the late President Sajith Premadasa and Dulanjali Premadasa were present on the occasion.

Begum Zia consoled the members of the bereaved family as she patted Sajith and Dulanjali.

The Prime Minister also placed wreath on the coffin of the late President lying in state at the President's House. The Prime Minister also signed the condolence book.

She wrote "I am deeply shocked at the killing of President Premadasa, Bangladesh has lost a genuine friend and one hundred crore people have lost a benevolent and farsighted leader. His contribution to the South Asian Regional Cooperation would be ever remembered. I strongly condemn the killing of this great leader. I express grief with the members of the bereaved family and Sri Lankan people and pray for the peace of the departed soul."

The other members of the Bangladesh delegation were also present on the occasion.

Train crushes three vehicles over Kalurghat bridge

CHITTAGONG, May 6: A train rammmed and crushed three vehicles at Kalurghat Bridge over Karnafuly river today (Thursday) but all the passengers managed to escape to safety, reports UNB.

Witnesses and officials said road communication between Chittagong and Cox's Bazar was disrupted for three hours following the accident that occurred at 1:30 pm.

A Chittagong-bound train from Dohazari came over the bridge ignoring signal while Cox's Bazar-bound vehicles were crossing the bridge.

Sighting the train coming from the opposite direction, the frightened passengers jumped from their vehicles and took shelter on the bridge-side at risk.

The train hit and completely damaged a jeep, a microbus and a private car on the spot.

CPB session

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crash of the hardline group, as well as the party line adopted in the last congress, provided the hardliners agreed to change the name of the party.

According to meeting sources, four reformist leaders addressed the central committee members supporting the compromise formula, originally moved by Shamsuddoha, MP.

These leaders were Dr Saudur Rahman, Lutfur Rahman, Sarwar Ali and Mani-ruz-zaman.

Mujahidul Islam Selim and Moshed Ali, leaders of the hardliners in the central committee, appreciated the "spirit of the move for retaining party unity, sources said."

But both of them told the meeting yesterday that it was difficult for them to accept the reformists' demand for changing the party name.

The hardliners, however, agreed to further discuss the issue in informal meetings before the formal central committee meeting to be held on the 18 of this month, sources said.

Should the feuding groups fail to reach an understanding on the issue, it would in all likelihood lead to an official break up of the party, sources said.

Earlier, before his departure, the Aga Khan visited the Aga Khan School at Sector 4 in Uttara Model Town.

The Midnight File

Fresh fighting in Kabul

KABUL, May 6: Bloody fighting between government troops and Shi'ite Mujahedeen erupted here late this afternoon, frontline soldiers said, describing the worst ceasefire violation in two months. Tank and rocket fire exchanges resulted in heavy casualties, they said. Police Commander Nik Mohammad said clashes with the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat faction had left four of his men dead and three wounded. At least 20 civilians were also hurt in his sector, he said, reports AFP.

Columbia lands safely

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE (California), May 6: The space shuttle Columbia landed safely here today after a 10-day mission in space largely devoted to German scientific experiments. The shuttle landing was put back more than an hour and switched to Edwards Air Force Base in California from its originally-scheduled site at Cape Canaveral, Florida because of low clouds there early Thursday, reports AFP.

15 Kashmiri leaders barred from leaving for S Arabia

NEW DELHI, May 6: Police have stopped 15 Kashmiri leaders from leaving India for Saudi Arabia, saying their visits were aimed at drumming up support for Muslim militants in the border state, officials said today. Four of them were stopped at the New Delhi airport late Wednesday and the others today before they could board planes with Muslim devotees, ostensibly to participate in the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah, reports AFP.

Flood in Sylhet

Waters rolling down from hilly areas across the Sylhet border have swelled the rivers there with Manu crossing the danger level at Manu railway bridge Thursday morning, Flood Information Centre in Dhaka said, reports UNB.

The water level of the river reached close to the danger mark at Moulvibazar and is likely to cross it any time, FIC said.

The river was flowing 2.52 centimetre above the danger level at Manu railway bridge at 6 am yesterday.

Boat capsizes: One drowns in Jamuna

SIRAJGANJ, May 6: A man drowned and three others were reported missing after an engine boat capsized in the Jamuna near Khudabandi village in Kazipur thana Wednesday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the Tangail-bound boat carrying 10 passengers and 56 cows from Sariakandi in Bogra overturned in midstream, killing Fazlul Huq (35), a cattle trader.

The body of Huq was found floating in the river along with 13 cows near village Chormara in Kazipur thana. Three passengers and 7 cows were still missing. The rest of the passengers swam ashore.

Huq was identified as the son of one Badaruddin of Nalapara village in Delduar thana of Tangail district. His body was sent to his village home.

Sindh by-polls

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Two seats were won by the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) led by deposed Premier Nawaz Sharif, while three went to another PML faction headed by Pir Pagaro.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's son-in-law Irfanullah Marwat won a seat after tough competition in the only Karachi constituency where some activity was noticed.

The outcome of the by-election could boost provincial Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussain Shah, whose fragile coalition was shaken after the dismissal of the Sharif government by the President on April 18.

Shah joined the President's camp during the power tussle between Ishaq Khan and Sharif, but his opponent the PDA, which joined the federal government after Sharif's ousting, is demanding his removal.

Aga Khan

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"I look forward to substantial cooperation in concerted efforts toward development in health, education and other key areas," he said adding "Inshallah, these will be of immense benefit to the Bangladesh people."

The Prince thanked Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Bangladesh government for the warmth and cordiality given to him and his delegation during the visit.

School children stood up in salutation as the Aga Khan walked through the red carpet to emplane the private jet for flying back to Paris.

A small girl presented him with a bouquet and the Aga Khan patted her affectionately.

The spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims held talks with President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during his stay here.

Known for his penchant for welfare activities for the poor, the Aga Khan took time off from his busy itinerary in the capital to see for himself such activities in the rural Bangladesh.

Earlier, before his departure, the Aga Khan visited the Aga Khan School at Sector 4 in Uttara Model Town.

Delhi willing

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story" Narasimha Rao took note of a suggestion by Oli Ahmad for the setting up of a 132 kilometre 'Friendship Railway Track' by India and Bangladesh.

The Indian Prime Minister, stated that he was happy that Oli Ahmad's talks with various ministers during his visit had been so fruitful. He expressed satisfaction that Ahmad's talks with the Home Minister had resulted in an agreement to work out immediately a schedule for the repatriation of the Chakma refugees to Bangladesh. He reiterated India's readiness to solve this problem. Stating that "nothing succeeds like success" Rao recalled his personal initiative to resolve the long outstanding problem of Tinbha.

Rao said that in the same way concrete measures and proper follow-up action were required for the solution to the other problems. On the Ganges water issue, he reiterated that no hardship should be caused to the people of Bangladesh on this account.

Rao requested Oli Ahmad to convey his warm greetings and good wishes to Begum Khaleda Zia.

One killed, 90 injured Nor'westers lash 3 districts

Severe nor'westers lashed Jhenidah Thursday night, Lalmonirhat in the early hours yesterday and Manikganj Wednesday night killing one, injuring 90 people and causing extensive damages to property, reports UNB.

A student was killed and at least 50 people were injured as a severe storm coupled with torrential rain lashed Kotechandpur thana in Jhenidah Thursday night.

Villagers said the hour-long nor'wester, which began at 8.45 pm, damaged several hundred thatched houses and uprooted a large number of trees in Rudharapur, Sabdalpur and Baluhar unions of the thana.

The dead was identified as Milon, 16, a student of class nine.

He died instantly when a mango tree crashed on him near Kotechandpur bus stand.

In Lalmonirhat a severe nor'wester lashed Sadar and Aditmari thana of the district early hours of Thursday causing extensive damage to property worth about Tk one crore.

At least 25 people were injured. Of them, Anwar, 14, a student of class eight of Giasuddin High School was admitted to the sadar hospital with head injuries.

Shamsunnahar, 30, Akbar Ali, 26, and Abdul Malek, 40, were released after first aid.

Rainfall was recorded 48 mm in the town. Hail weighing

about one kg was found in the pourashava areas.

Power supply in the town and telecommunication between Aditmari and Kaliganj thana are yet to be restored. Train communication was disrupted for about 3 hours as two bogies were derailed near the station due to storm wind.

The worst affected areas are College road, Mission road, Khord Sitana, Juhitari, Khochabari, Kulaghat, Dodogach, Kashipur, Borobari and Bathbari of Sadar thana and Burirhat, Plashi, Moishashur and Chandbari of Aditmari thana.

A nor'wester hit 10 villages of four unions in Sibalaya thana in Manikganj Wednesday night leaving 15 people injured, witnesses said.

The storm, lasting about half an hour, damaged about 500 thatched houses and uprooted a number of trees in the villages of Utali, Teota, Sadar and Ujjal unions.

Bangladesh recognises Eritrea

Bangladesh yesterday recognised Eritrea as an independent country, a foreign office spokesman said, reports UNB.

Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia in a UN monitored referendum held on April 23-25.

Serb Assembly rejects

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backing from allies for a military plan. Christopher was holding talks with allies Thursday to gain support for military action.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, listening to Clinton's comments on Cable News Network, invited Clinton, and Christopher to visit Bosnia-Herzegovina to see conditions for themselves.

"This is not a delaying tactic. This is our lives and our destiny. We are not invading," Karadzic told CNN.

The Bosnian Serb parliament has already rejected the peace plan twice and hard-line Serbs likely to reject the plan dominate the areas where the May 15-16 referendum would be held.

Bosnian Serb leaders complain that the peace plan, which would divide Bosnia into 10 provinces, largely along ethnic lines, gives Serbs only 43 per cent of the republic's territory.

Serb rebels have seized 70 per cent of Bosnia in the year-old war and seem intent on creating a "Greater Serbia" — connecting Serb-held lands in Bosnia and Croatia with Serbia, the dominant republic in what remains of the Yugoslav federation. The peace plan would deny the Serbs those land links.

The war began after Bosnia's majority Muslims and Croats voted to secede from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. More than 134,000 people are dead of missing in a year of warfare.

"Our efforts have been in vain. The Vance-Owen plan was rejected despite a final appeal by key leaders from Belgrade and the European

Community," said Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis, who also addressed today's session in Pale.

Earlier Mitsotakis told the assembly "you cannot oppose the whole world. No one can do that."

"Milosevic told deputies they were playing into the hands of the Muslims by opposing the plan," Iztbegovic (the Muslim Bosnian president) has lost the war. His last hope is to provoke military intervention. This is what you are offering him," Milosevic said.

Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic, who had urged acceptance, said afterward: "The parliament took the worst decision, and I don't know what the next night will bring."

President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, who had been the Bosnian Serbs' main backer, had urged the deputies to "vote for peace."

Cosic and Milosevic stormed out of the meeting after the vote. Milosevic had no comment.

In Sarajevo, Bosnian government radio said the Serb stance was now clear and it was up to the United States and the United Nations to take action.

Lord David Owen today held open the military option in Bosnia, but pleaded against "rushing in", saying his peace plan rejected by the Bosnian Serb parliament early today was not dead.

"I don't think [military intervention] will be necessary," he told reporters outside his London office. "I don't think we need to talk about it at this stage. We need to focus attention on what happens in Belgrade."

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