

## Shutdown in Pakistan to back Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD, Feb 5: Pakistan was shut down today by a government called general strike to support a separatist revolt in the Indian-ruled part of Kashmir, reports Reuters.

Anti-India rallies were held across the country and in Pakistan-controlled Azad (free) Kashmir. Protesters burned effigies of Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao in Islamabad and some other towns.

Officials in the Azad Kashmir capital Muzaffarabad said Indian troops fired across a United Nations-monitored ceasefire line at Athmugam in Azad Kashmir's Neelum Valley this morning, wounding a young man.

Today's strikes in Pakistan for the past several years, follows heightened tensions between the two neighbours after an alleged Indian rocket attack on a border town in Azad Kashmir 10 days ago that killed 20 people.

All government and private offices, markets, industries and ports were shut and there was no public transport on roads as a mark of solidarity with Kashmiri militants fighting for independence or union with Pakistan, witnesses said. The country's three stock exchanges were also shut.

In Islamabad hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside parliament, carrying banners reading, "Kashmir will become Pakistan" and "stop cruelties in Kashmir".

The crowd burnt Rao's effigies and tried to break through a police barricade, but riot police prevented them from surging towards the Indian High Commission in the nearby diplomatic enclave.

A small delegation led by Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, chairman of a parliamentary committee on Kashmir, was allowed to deliver a protest note to the Indian mission.

The demonstrators later went to Islamabad's sister city of Rawalpindi in trucks and buses to attend a public rally.

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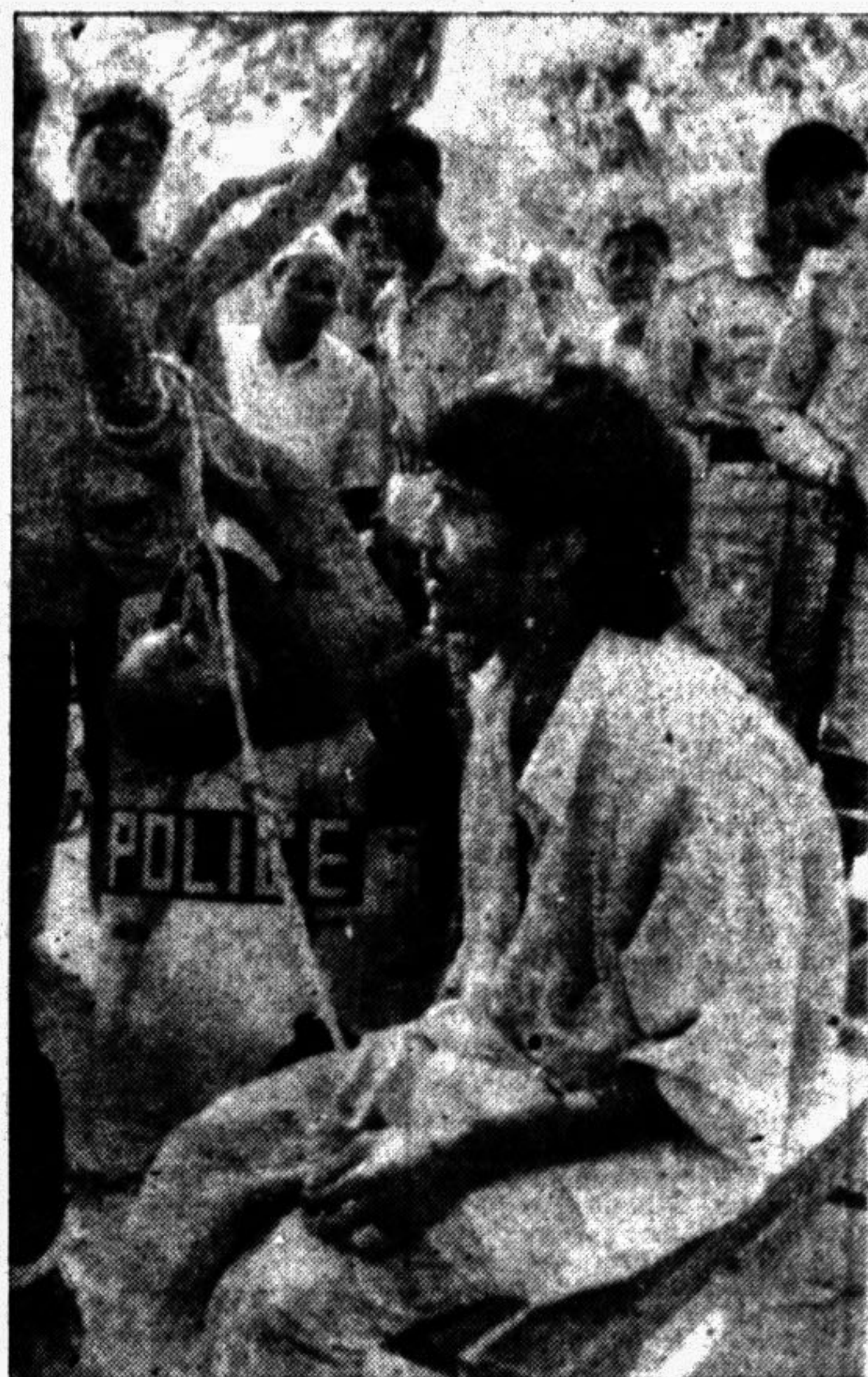
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**PUNISHMENT INDEED:** A baby taxi driver was tied to a tree near the Zero Point in the city by the traffic police for violating traffic signals yesterday. The taxi driver was humiliated in front of hundreds of curious on-lookers for hours and later released. — Star photo

## Villagers beaten up

lagers alleged, the security personnel ransacked the last 40 houses, beat up the inmates and damaged households.

The villagers further alleged that the securitymen went for raiding the houses in the village indiscriminately. During the raids, they rounded up about 100 youths and put them in a queue for interrogation at the local ferry ghat.

However, all the youths, except three, were later released. The three — Abdul Rahim, 30, Yusuf Ali, 18 and Imamul Haq, 32 — were reportedly picked up.

Talking to this correspondent, Mansur Ali Matabbar said his son Yusuf Ali was beaten up and later taken away by the securitymen. "Narayanganj police did not take my complaint and I could not know the whereabouts of my son," added Matabbar.

Rashida Begum alleged that her husband, Abdul Rahim, was taken after being seriously manhandled. "But I don't know the reason why my husband was taken away," she said.

Farida Begum, a field worker of the family planning department, alleged that two of her sons — Faiz Hossain and Monir Hossain — were beaten up indiscriminately without any reason.

She said the villagers did not have any objection to nabbing the criminals, but asked why innocent people should be victimised. Ismail Hossain, a homopath, said he was afraid of opening his chamber in the village due to the unusual situation now prevailing in the area.

## One killed in Feni clash

Local Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami have called for the shutdown from 6 am to 3 pm as the Prime Minister is scheduled to arrive here on a two-day visit for election campaign.

Begum Zia, is contesting the ensuing parliament election from Feni-1 and Feni-2 constituencies. Meanwhile, pro-Awami League Chhatra League activists brought out a procession in the Feni town carrying black flags to protest the Prime Minister's planned visit.

Another UNB report in the capital said that Alhaj Michbahur Rahman Chowdhury, President of Young Muslim Society and a candidate from Dhaka-6 constituency, was assaulted by anti-election campaigners in the city yesterday.

Police said the anti-election campaigners attacked a meeting of the Society near WAPDA gate at Mughdipara in the evening. Michbahur, however, managed to escape from the venue with head injuries.

He is also contesting the coming parliament election from Moulvibazar-3 against Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

Our Staff Correspondent reported from Sylhet: An election projection meeting of Shehabuddin, an independent candidate from Sylhet-5 constituency (Jakkiganj-Kanighat) was foiled by activists of opposition parties at Chotuba Bazar in Kanighat yesterday.

When Shahabuddin began the public meeting, a group of opposition workers asked him to stop. But he tried to continue. They then snatched

## Polls should have been postponed: FBCCI

The business community yesterday viewed that the planned elections should have been postponed until an understanding was reached for a "fully participatory" polls to avoid confrontation in future, reports UNB.

The suggestion came from the business community leaders while exchanging views on the political situation during a meeting with the leaders of the Awami League at its office in the afternoon with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Meeting sources said: "The business community's observation followed a request by the Awami League president for resisting the 'one-party, farcical elections' scheduled for February 15.

"Come, let's unitedly force the government to stop the mock elections for holding a free and fair voting under a neutral caretaker government for the interest of the people," Hasina told the businessmen.

She said there will be no peace for the business community if the election is held on February 15 without the participation of the country's major political parties.

Saiman F Rahman, the President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said the next elections would not ensure a political stability which is "so vital" for economic development.

We are convinced that the coming elections will not produce the much needed stability in the country," said

Sit-in in front of DU VC's residence

The students of Jagannath Hall under the banner of Jagannath Hall Paribar staged a sit-in in front of the residence of the Vice Chancellor yesterday protesting the police action and demanding release of the students still in custody.

They also boycotted classes. The students later held a rally which was addressed by Priotosh Roy Bhowmick, Pankaj Suraj, Proloy Joarder, Keshab Chandra Shil, Prasanta Bhushan Barua and Subhash Singha Roy.

UK halts export of Swedish equipment to Pakistan

STOCKHOLM, Feb 5: British officials have halted the export of Swedish equipment ordered by a Pakistani company suspected of aiding Pakistan's nuclear programme, the Daily Svenska Dagbladet reported on Sunday, reports AFP.

The laser-measuring instruments were ordered last year from a Swedish firm, whose name was not disclosed, and were exported via London's Heathrow Airport.

According to the newspaper, British customs officials refused to allow the equipment to be carried on a Pakistan airlines aircraft after discovering they had been ordered by Pakistani firm Global Consultancy.

The company was on a list of companies covertly used by Islamabad to develop its nuclear military programme, the newspaper added.

Unb adds from Sirajganj. Opposition activists attacked election campaigners and broke microphones in some places of the district yesterday.

Abdus Sattar Nazlee, a candidate of Freedom Party for Sirajganj-1 (Belkuchi-Kamarkhand) constituency, was chased by Opposition activists when he brought out an election procession at Jangalbar in Kamarkhand thana.

Anti-election demonstrators reportedly broke the microphone being used for campaign for former MP and BNP candidate for Sirajganj-3 (Raiganj-Tarash), Abdul Mannan Talukder at Chandaikona Bazar.

Meanwhile, opposition parties have vowed to resist the election meeting for BNP candidate Shahidullah Khan at Alhaj Siddiqui High School ground today.

State Minister for Forest and Environment Gayeshwar Roy is scheduled to address the meeting.

District Awami League, in a press conference yesterday announced a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town on February 11 to foil a planned visit of the Prime Minister who is a candidate from Sirajganj-2 seat.

District AL general secretary Abdul Latif Mirza declared the programme which also includes black flag demonstration and wearing of black badges to protest the PM's electioneering tour.

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## The Midnight File

### Israel to continue peace talks with Syria

JERUSALEM, Feb 5: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres pledged today to pursue peace negotiations with Syria even if Israel holds early elections this spring. "No matter what will happen in the country, we feel obliged to continue the negotiations without interruption," Peres said after two hours of talks with the US envoy, reports AFP.

### Anti-Russian protest continues in Chechnya

MOSCOW, Feb 5: Russian armoured vehicles advanced towards a building in the Chechen regional capital Grozny where supporters of rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudaev had been holding an anti-Russian protest today, ITAR-Tass news agency said, reports Reuters.

"In connection with an aggravation in the situation in the Chechen capital federal forces' armoured vehicles have been moved up to the former presidential palace," Tass said.

AP adds: The large anti-Russian rally resumed today as people gathered for a second day to demand the immediate withdrawal of federal troops from their separatist republic.

Up to 5,000 people demonstrated in front of the ruined presidential palace in Grozny, the Interfax news agency said. Many had arrived in buses and cars from other Chechen towns.

Protesters have hoisted two green flags of Islam and of the republic of Ichkeria, as the separatists call Chechnya, over the building. A portrait of rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudaev dressed in his military uniform was hanging over the entrance.

Occasional single shots rang out and protesters shouted "Allah Akbar" and anti-Russian slogans through loudspeakers, the ITAR-Tass news agency said.

Chechen police have not interfered and stayed 500 meters from the rally.

Protesters blast cocktails around Dhaka Stadium

Some unidentified people hurled more than 20 cocktails while police lobbed several tear gas shells around the National Stadium creating panic in the area yesterday morning.

The violence started when a group of people was reportedly protesting the one-day exhibition match between the visiting British MCC and Bangladesh 'A' teams, witnesses said.

The chase and counter-chase between the protesters and the police spread to Bangabandhu Avenue, GPO and Gulistan area, witnesses said.

Traffic movement was disrupted in the roads around the stadium for about one and a half hours.

Show cause on EC

The Election Commission to show cause within three days as to why the acceptance of the nomination paper of Zahir Uddin Swapan, a BNP nominee, by the Returning Officer and the order of the EC dated January 27 last refusing the review of the said acceptance should not be declared as made without lawful authority and is of no legal effect.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice Bimalendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury and Justice Md Abdul Mannan, upon a writ petition filed by Abdus-Sobhan, one of the rival candidates of Swapan, issued the rule nisi.

The respondents in the petition include the Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commissioner, Zahir Uddin Swapan, and the Deputy Commissioner of Barisal.

Dr Kamal Hossain, chief counsel for the petitioner, submitted that Zahir Uddin Swapan being an admitted facts the proprietor of M/S Sun-Shine Enterprise, a construction firm under the Ministry of Education in Facilities Department, having interest in a government contract falls within the mischief of Section 12 (1) (b) of the Representation of People Order, 1972.

It was said in the petition that challenging the candidature of Zahir Uddin Swapan the petitioner filed an application before the Returning Officer, Barisal which was rejected on January 18.

Thereafter, the petitioner filed a review petition before the Chief Election Commissioner on January 20 which was fixed for hearing on January 22, but though the petition was ready for hearing it was adjourned till January 27 and the petitioner received the order of rejection on January 31, the petition alleged.

The JP called upon the officials and professionals not to participate in the election process and the Radio-TV authorities to refrain from broadcasting results of "farcical" election. It also urged transport workers not to carry election materials.

Central JP leaders Roushan Ershad, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed were also present at the press conference.

Golam Azam for non-cooperation instead of applying force

The Opposition parties will not resist the election with force but with the non-cooperation of the people, Jamaat-e-Islami chief Prof Golam Azam said here yesterday.

He was announcing at a press conference a five-day agitation programme of his party which include a 48-hour hartal on February 14 and 15 to resist the election. The Jamaat leader said that postponement of the election was inevitable because the people would reject it and that the postponement would not create a great constitutional crisis.

He also urged the officials and professionals to refrain from doing election duty. They will be identified as "destroyers of voting rights of the people" if they do it, he said.

The Jamaat leader appealed to the officials and employees of the radio and the TV to refrain from broadcasting results of the "farcical" election.

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