

Indo-Pak troops trade heavy gunfire on Kashmir border

JAMMU, India, Feb 11: Indian and Pakistani troops traded heavy gunfire on their disputed Kashmir border, leaving at least one civilian injured on the Indian side, officials said today, reports AFP.

Pakistani troops started the "unprovoked firing" late Saturday and it continued past midnight in the border area of Samba, 45 kilometers (28 miles) from this winter capital of Kashmir state, the officials said.

A spokesman for India's Border Security Force (BSF) said the Pakistani gunfire involving medium and light machine guns was meant to provide cover "for Kashmiri and Pakistani terrorists trying to enter Kashmir."

The skirmishes broke a 12-day calm on the tense Kashmir border, where the armies of the two countries traded heavy fire from January 19 to 30, triggering fears of a larger conflict.

The Pakistanis began fir-

ing from two border posts (Saturday), the spokesman said. "The firing went on for almost three hours ... they used mainly medium weapons. More than 30,000 rounds were fired by them."

A villager was injured in the firing and hospitalised, officials said.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training Muslim militants fighting to end Indian rule over Kashmir, where a bitter separatist campaign has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

Pakistan denies the charge but gives open diplomatic support to the unrest, calling it a legitimate struggle for self-determination. Kashmir is India's only Muslim-majority state.

India and Pakistan dispute the ownership of Kashmir, and have fought two of their three wars over the picturesque province.

Another report from Islamabad says, Pakistan today

accused Indian troops of firing on Pakistani military posts along the disputed border in Kashmir state, ending a 12 days of calm on the tense border.

A Defence Ministry official confirming an earlier Indian report of an exchange of fire in the Samba, sector 45 kms from Jammu, said the clash occurred due to "unprovoked Indian firing" on Pakistan posts.

The exchange of light machinegun fire was not between the regular troops, he said adding that the skirmishes lasted for about two hours late Saturday and involved Pakistan rangers and the BSF.

A BSF spokesman in Jammu, earlier blamed the shooting on Pakistani troops, adding the gunfire involving medium and light machine guns was meant to provide cover "for Kashmiri and Pakistani terrorists trying to enter Kashmir."



The Awami League brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting attacks on Saturday's rally. — Star photo

Anti-polls violence

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cles and a car owned by a foreign national, police and witnesses said.

The processionists even did not allow fire fighting vehicles to go to the spot and also started to damage some other vehicles and nearby shops, witnesses said.

When police chased the agitators, they fired on police, threw cocktails and bricks.

Police also opened fire on the agitators and the two sides were locked in an hour-long battle.

Later, police raided the college campus and recovered some illegal arms and ammunition, police sources said.

The killing of Bashir Ali cast a pall of gloom on the rank and file of police and created tension in the entire port city.

Meanwhile, Chhatra League MES college unit, in a statement alleged that police attacked its supporters today without any provocation and picked up over 100 of them after torturing them.

On the other hand, sporadic bomb blasts took place this evening at Bipani Bitan crossing and some other places.

Some election camps were torched at Fatikchhari and Rangunia by anti-poll agitators, police said.

But they could not give details till the filing of this report at 10:30 pm.

UNB adds from Chittagong: Several BNP offices and election camps in different parts of the district were attacked by anti-election activists yesterday.

Witnesses said some unidentified people hurled crackers at the city BNP office at Nashon Bhaban at Nur Ahmed road at about 8:30 pm. But the crackers exploded outside the office.

Earlier, at about 5:30 pm, at least four crackers were hurled at the ruling party's south district office at Dost building.

Meanwhile, anti-election activists torched the camp of Najibul Bashar Majbhandari, a BNP candidate from Chittagong-5 constituency (Fatikchhari), at Bibirhat at about 2:30 pm.

Besides, the election camp of BNP candidate Adil Hossain from Chittagong-7 constituency (Rangunia) was set on fire by the anti-election activists at about 4 pm.

Our Khulna correspondent reported that anti-election activists during a procession torched the local passport office at Sonadanga at around 11:30 am.

Valuable documents were damaged in the fire as the activists prevented the fire brigade from putting it out. Local people put out the fire, witnesses said.

Our Sylhet Correspondent reported that five policemen were injured when anti-election activists hurled a home-made bomb on their tempo at Zindabazar in the town yesterday. The activists also set the tempo ablaze. The incident sparked off a chase and counter-chase between police and the anti-polls activists in which about 20 people were injured. One of the injured persons were admitted to the MAG Osmany Medical College Hospital.

In another incident bombs were hurled on the Sylhet Auditorium in the morning where a training programme of the presiding officers and polling officers was going on. None was however, injured in the incident.

At Copalgata thana, a nominee of Jatiyatabadi Awami League who is contesting from Sylhet-6 constituency was beaten by Opposition activists when he tried to addressing an election meeting there. Police rescued him.

Our correspondent from Jhenaidah reported that anti-election activists ransacked Saikupa thana BNP office and a campaign offices of an independent candidate Advocate Golam Mostafa and Jatiya

Nagarik Sanghati candidate Sharful Pervej Roni. After the incidents, some 50/60 BNP activists brought out a procession. The residence of a local Awami League leader Raihan Uddin was reportedly attacked in the afternoon.

Anti election activists had blasted at least 50 hand-bombs in different parts of Saikupa town on Saturday night.

UNB adds from Lalmonirhat: Ten people were injured in a clash between the activists of ruling BNP and Jatiya Party in the town yesterday.

Witnesses said the clash erupted when the ruling party activists allegedly attacked a JP procession at Mission Square at about 7:30 pm.

Later, pro-Awami League and JP activists simultaneously brought out separate processions in the town protesting the "one party" election.

Several homemade bombs were hurled at police when the procession reached Alorupur Cinema.

UNB adds from Kishoreganj: At least 20 people, including a policeman, were injured in a clash between police and anti-election activists in Pakundia thana yesterday.

The clash erupted as police intercepted an anti-election procession marching towards the house of Deputy Minister for Shipping ABM Zahidul Haque at Narshidi village at about 2 pm.

Earlier, at about 12:30 pm, the processionist ransacked Pakundia TNO office during a training session of the presiding, assistant presiding and polling officers there.

They also ransacked furniture at the thana Agriculture, thana Ansar and local BNP offices, and the election camp of the Deputy Minister.

UNB adds from Cox's Bazar: Anti-election activists went on a rampage in the town ransacking the district BNP office and damaging half a dozen vehicles yesterday.

Police said the activists of Awami League and Jatiya Party brought out separate anti-election processions in the town and hurled bomb at the BNP office and ransacked it.

JP Office Case Trial adjourned till March 5

The trial of former president Hussain Muhammad Ershad and two others in a corruption case involving spending of money from state exchequer for renovating the Jatiya Party office in the city has been again adjourned yesterday following a prayer from the defence.

A prayer filed on behalf of Ershad in the court of Special Judge, Dhaka, sought adjournment of the case to enable the defence to appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against an order of the High Court.

First Additional Session Judge Ahlakur Rahman, who presided over the special judge's court, after hearing both sides, fixed March 5 as the next date of the case.

Former works minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former works secretary M A Rouf are the co-accused in this case.

The case was at its final stage with arguments of prosecution and two out of three accused persons completed when the previous presiding judge in an order in September last year recalled three witnesses for re-examination.

The defence challenged the order of the special judge and the high court after hearing last month rejected the appeal and opined that the trial court has a right to recall witnesses.

The defence being defeated in the high court now plans to appeal before the appellate division challenging trial court's order.

Khandkar Mahub Hossain, senior counsel of Ershad, said defence needed some time to prepare itself for the purpose.

Public prosecutor Abdur Razzaque Khan, who initially opposed the adjournment, later agreed to it.

BNP men beat up independent candidate

PIROJPUJUR, Feb 11: Supporters of the ruling BNP allegedly beat up independent candidate Shamsu Jalal Chowdhury and two of his workers at an election rally at Hularhat today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the attackers also ransacked the rally, damaged loudspeaker and chairs at the meeting venue.

Police later rescued Chowdhury from a shop where he hid himself. None was arrested.

Hasina

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warned the government of dire consequences of 'staging this farce.'

"We're carrying out the movement for safeguarding democracy, political stability, development, rule of law and voting rights of the people," she said asking the party leaders and workers to make the party programmes a success.

City Awami League President and Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif presided over the meeting. Party leaders Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Jalil, Prof. Abu Sayeed, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdul Mannan and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya were present.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday reiterated that the on February 15 elections would be resisted at any cost.

He was addressing a protest rally organised by the city unit of the party, at the Bangabandhu Avenue with its President Mohammad Hanif in the chair.

Speakers at the rally protested attacks on the rallies of Opposition political parties in their city on Saturday.

Addressing the rally, Mohammad Hanif said the arrogance of the Khaleda government was exposed by its attack on peaceful opposition rallies.

AL leaders Amir Hussain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Suranjit Sen Gupta and city unit General Secretary Mofazzal Hussain Chowdhury Maya also addressed the rally.

Arms recovery drive Cell at SC Bar for complaints

By Staff Correspondent

A cell to receive information on alleged harassment and torture of people by the combined forces during the on-going arms recovery drive has been set up at Room Number 57 of the Supreme Court Bar Association building.

This was announced at a session of open exchange of views at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday to "protect the harassment and torture of people, and violation of the Constitution" during the drive.

The discussions who included academicians, scholars, lawyers and other eminent personalities in different fields expressed their deep concern at the "excesses" done and violation of the Constitution by the combined force. They also questioned the effectiveness of such a recovery drive that has yielded negligible result.

A resolution adopted at the meeting urged the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to withdraw the armed forces and investigate the cases where people have been allegedly tortured.

The resolution also urged the CEC to give directives to the police for receiving First Information Report (FIR) from the aggrieved persons.

Dr Khan Sarwar Morshed who presided over the meeting said none is above the law of the country.

He said the arms recovery drive looks "fruitless," considering the number of arms recovered.

"The combined force is violating the Constitution and human rights in the name of arms recovery," said Barrister Lutfar Rahman. "Time has come to remain vigilant so that the Constitution can not be violated by any forces. Citizens, specially the youths and political leaders are being subjected to increasing torture and harassment."

Dr Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir said we have to fight for protection of human rights.

Prof Anisuzzaman of the Dhaka University said, "Innocent citizens are being tortured in the name of arms recovery. The government has been violating the rights of its citizens. We have to fight against terrorism in its totality."

Prof Anisur Rahman, an economist said, "We must counter terrorism at any cost. Any party or political leader harbouring terrorism should be punished along with the individual terrorists."

Khusi Kabir conducted the meeting which was also addressed by among others, Amanullah Kabir, Mamunur Rashid, Advocate Sigma Huda, Shamim Akhtar, Amir Khasru, Farida Akhtar, A N Rasheda, Nurul Islam Bhuiyan and Dr Hamida Hossain.

PCJSS extends truce till Mar 31

KHAGRACHARI, Feb 11: Parbatyia Chaitragram Jano Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the political umbrella of Shantibahini, has extended the ceasefire in the Chittagong Hill Tracts till March 31, reports UNB.

The ceasefire is scheduled to expire on February 15.

In a press statement, signed by Jagodish Chakma, the Samity alleged that the security forces in the region have violated the ceasefire for at least 24 times.

Hangshodhaj Chakma, a Liaison Committee member, today (Sunday) handed over the statement to the newsmen.

Earlier, the government accused the Shantibahini of violating ceasefire for 525 times in the region.

The JSS in the statement called upon the Jamma (hill people) and the countrymen to resist the February 15 election terming it as a "one party" move.

6 more expelled from BNP

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has expelled six leaders for their involvement in anti-party activities, said a press release yesterday, reports UNB.

The leaders are: S M Mokbul Hossain, General Secretary, Syamagar thana BNP, Kamrul Islam, Youth Secretary, Bagerhat district BNP, Md Faziul Haq Sagor, member, Barguna thana BNP, Ansarul Alam, member, Tallat Thana BNP, Engineer Md Yusuf, member, Kishoreganj district BNP and Suraiya Mannan, member, Patnaila thana BNP.



Police guarding a filling station in the city yesterday following recent attacks on some of the stations. — Star photo

PM warns Opposition

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She expressed her firm determination to hold the February 15 election. "By any means it will be done," she asserted.

Pointing to Awami League and Jatiya Party, the BNP chairperson said they do not believe in and practice democracy. They had established a reign of terror while in power and now as opposition are doing the same, she added.

"Despite the violence and anarchy let loose by them, there is tide of democracy sweeping the country," she said with a note of caution that the people of this soil would soon retaliate the misdeed and tyranny.

Without naming Awami League and Jamaat, the Prime Minister said they had helped the autocrats grab power in 1982 and killed the democracy.

"These three national betrayers are out to snatch the country's democracy and people's rights again," Begum Zia said, adding that the people would give them a good lesson after the February 15 election.

The meeting in the hartal-bound Sirajganj town was also addressed by State Minister

Rival tempo drivers clash in Ctg: 1 killed

CHITTAGONG, Feb 11: A fierce clash between two rival groups of tempo drivers at Madunaghat in Hathajari thana of the district today left a driver dead and 20 others injured, one with bullet, reports UNB.

Police said Md Hanif, 25, son of Md Yunus Khan of Guzza village in Chandnaish, was critically injured in the clash and succumbed to his wounds at Chittagong Medical College Hospital at 7 pm.

The clash between the associations of Modunaghat tempo drivers and those of Fatehabad area erupted following a feud over setting up a tempo station in Madunaghat area.

Seriously injured Akbar, 18, was admitted to the CMCH with several bullet injuries.

When contacted the district administration confirmed the incident.

Traffic on Chittagong Kapatal road remained disrupted as the tempo drivers put up barricades on the road at Rashidbari near Modunaghat area in the evening.

The Midnight File

100 hurt in Seoul stampede

SEOUL, Feb 11: About 100 people were injured Sunday after thousands of horse-racing spectators fled a race course, mistaking an accidental fire extinguisher discharge for an explosion, a news reports said. The incident happened when a spectator inadvertently broke loose a safety pin on the 3.8-kilogram fire extinguisher he was sitting on. Yonhap Television News said, reports AP.

Stop Feb 15 polls: WP

Workers Party yesterday reiterated its demand for elections under a caretaker government on the basis of understanding of all parties cancelling the February 15 polls, reports UNB.

In a statement, WP leader Rashed Khan Menon said after the "voterless election" of February 15 the government of Khaleda Zia will not more be able to claim itself an elected one and the people will not obey its orders.

The people will force that government to step down and elect a truly representative one, he added.

6 Opposition activists held in Rajshahi

RAJSHAH, Feb 11: An uneasy calm prevailed in the strife-torn northern city today after violent clashes left three people, including a policeman, dead in past three days, reports UNB.

No major untoward incident took place in the city today but life was yet to return to normal.

Six opposition activists were arrested today on charge of killing police constable Babul Akhtar on Saturday. The arrested are: Abul Kalam Azad, Nurul Islam, Malek, Khairul Bashar, Liton and Khokon.

Rule on govt

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Bhattacharja, Shuvaprasad, Alok Kumar Mukharjee and two others while Mong A Ching Chak on behalf of Priyotara Chak, filed another petition.

The detenues along with 78 students were arrested from Jagannath Hall on January 31 on the eve of the inauguration of the Bangla Academy Book Fair by the Prime Minister on February 1.

Four students were released from the Ramna thana in that ought as they claimed themselves as workers of the Bangladesh Chhatra Dal.

Ninety students were produced before the court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on February 1 and 34 of them were granted bail.

On February 3, the detenues were served the order of detention and the rest were enlarged on bail.

The detenues were intimidated the grounds of detention on February 11.

Dr Kamal Hossain, on behalf of the petitioners, submitted that the detenues had no nexus with the incidents which happened near the TSC and Bangla Academy areas. During the occurrence they were in their rooms or in the dining hall.

He also submitted that the grounds for detention are vague, motivated and mala fide.

As the detenues are examinees he submitted for their bail till disposal of the rule.

The Court fixed the rule for disposal today after hearing the Attorney General.

Advocate Nizamul Huq Nasim moved for the petitioner Mong A Ching Chak.

Dr Kamal Hossain to move the petitions.

62 more expelled from BNP

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has expelled 62 leaders for their involvement in anti-party activities, said a press release yesterday, reports UNB.

The leaders are: S M Mokbul Hossain, General Secretary, Syamagar thana BNP, Kamrul Islam, Youth Secretary, Bagerhat district BNP, Md Faziul Haq Sagor, member, Barguna thana BNP, Ansarul Alam, member, Tallat Thana BNP, Engineer Md Yusuf, member, Kishoreganj district BNP and Suraiya Mannan, member, Patnaila thana BNP.

50 pc of WASA water has harmful germ

An official survey found 50 per cent of the WASA water supplied in the capital city contaminated with harmful germs and hence undrinkable, reports UNB.

The Directorate of Environment conducted the sample survey in different parts of Jigatola and Hajiribagh as part of its water-monitoring programme, an official said.

They collected 14 samples of water from different sources in the two areas and found 50 per cent of those contaminated with hazardous bacteria.

The result of water examination shows that 50 per cent WASA water in the city is unfit for drinking, said the official of the Environment Directorate responding to a query from UNB yesterday.

According to a release of the Directorate the water samples were collected from residence, hotels and community centres of the two areas on January 24 to examine standard of drinking water in the city.

Later, the samples were examined at Dhaka divisional laboratory of the Directorate.

The samples containing germs were taken from Sugandha Community Centre at Jigatola, Cafe Jigatola Restaurant, 4/4 Jigatola Chhaytala Colony (1st floor), Ground Tank at Jigatola Chhaytala Colony, Nuruddin Tanneries Hotel and Faruk Hotel at Hajiribagh and 14/1 Jigatola School Colony (1st floor).

Opposition

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The meeting was also critical of the role of the Chief Election Commissioner, Secretary of the Election Commission Secretariat and the Election Commission for 'ruining' the electoral procedures in the country, Nasim said.

Panchagarh

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end the crisis permanently," said the Deputy Commissioner of Panchagarh district when asked about it. Saiful Islam further said the dispute over the 'occupied land' should be resolved immediately through negotiations between the two countries.

Grand opening

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the tournament open, each captain received his national colours from former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen.

Not everyting went right at the ceremony. A stiff breeze took the shine off Luceetta's laser shows as images fluttered in the wind. Film actor Saeed Jaffrey, the master of ceremonies, got the names mixed up when the teams entered the stadium.

Debutantes United Arab Emirates may not mind being called the South Africans — but it remains to be seen if they play as well when action in the tournament begins on Wednesday.

The ceremony ended with a spectacular display of fireworks that continued even after the crowds left the stadium.

England take on New Zealand in the opening match in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad.

India will host 17 matches. Pakistan 16 and Sri Lanka two.

Tariff concessions

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officials said.

Under the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAFTA) which came into operation from December seven last year, the SAARC member countries have already agreed to offer tariff concessions on as many as 226 items.

India feels that in view of total of 5000 tariff lines in the international harmonised code of commodity classification up to six digit level, SAARC member countries will have to cover at least one quarter of 5000 items per year over next four years in order to achieve the target of establishing SAFTA by 2000 AD, under which there will be no tariff or non-tariff barriers for trade among the South Asian countries, officials said.