

Sikh minorities celebrate 300 years of founding of religion

ANANDPUR SAHIB (India), Nov 22: Sikhs danced and sang on the streets of this northern town on Sunday, flashing swords, blowing trumpets and riding horses and elephants to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the founding of their religious brotherhood, reports AP.

The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak in 1469. In the 16th century, Guru Gobind Singh, tenth in the line of teachers, introduced military overtones in an attempt to stop persecution of the Sikhs and founded the Khalsa or Sikh brotherhood.

Followers of the religion, usually called Singh, or Lion, are enjoined to be god fearing, self-abrogating, martial and classless. To remind them of their duties, they sport long hair covered in a turban and carry a sword. Sikhs are regarded as among the fiercest martial races of India. Most families today one child to join the military.

On Sunday, tens of thousands of Sikhs prayed and sang hymns at Anandpur Sahib, 275 kilometres (170 miles) north-west of New Delhi, to celebrate the founding of the brotherhood. They then marched through the town's streets, led by the five holy representatives of the Sikh religion.

The procession included a stunning display of martial arts skills by 300 conservative Sikhs, dressed in blue shirts and turbans, who waved swords four-feet long. Others beat drums, sounded trumpets, sang songs and chanted prayers.

The representatives, known as Panj Pyaras, laid the foundation stone of a heritage complex that Israeli architect Moshe Safdie is building at a cost of 2,500 million rupees (dhs 58 million). When completed in the next three years, it will house relics associated with the Sikh religion.

Most of India's nearly 20 million Sikhs live in the northwestern state of Punjab, where a violent campaign for a Sikh homeland raged for 10 years before it was crushed in 1994.

Lankan troops step up patrols

COLOMBO, Nov 22: Sri Lankan troops and police stepped up patrols and road blocks as Tamil rebel commemoration of their dead cadres got underway, officials said today, reports AFP.

The Air Force had carried out attacks in the northeast of the country on Saturday, the first day of the Heroes' Week, marked by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), officials said.

The rebels usually organise religious services to invoke blessings on their fighters killed in action but the military accuses the guerrillas of also staging attack to mark the week.

There is a high state of alert sounded in Colombo as well as in the suburbs. A police spokesman said it is usual to take extra precautions at this time of the year.

Troops have also been told to be extra vigilant amid fears of fresh guerrilla attacks in the north and the east of the country where the LTTE is fighting to establish an independent state.

Last year, there were no major attacks during the heroes' week.

In a message to mark the occasion last year, LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran urged his supporters to fight on, saying there was no liberation without death, destruction, bloodshed and sacrifice.

Prabhakaran, Sri Lanka's most wanted man, said he was not opposed to negotiations with the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, a member of the majority Sinhalese community, but did not expect success.

'Dewanganj to turn into municipality'

Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Zillur Rahman yesterday said that the government had already issued an order for turning Dewanganj thana sadar under Jamalpur district into a municipality as desired by the people of the area, reports BSS.

He said this responding to a call attention notice brought by Abul Kalam Azad of Awami League from Jamalpur-1.

Responding to another call attention notice, placed by Abdul Latif Mirza of Awami League from Sirajganj-4, Zillur Rahman said Taka 1.48 crore was being spent for the repair, reconstruction and rehabilitation of various infrastructures damaged by the recent floods in Ullapara thana of the Sirajganj district.

He said the LGED has already allocated Taka five lakh each for repair of Garadha-Mahampur road and a culvert in Jamtara hat road under Ullapara thana.

Besides, he said, Taka 42.54,400 was allocated at the initial stage for the rehabilitation of bridges, roads and culverts through the Sirajganj District Council.

Clinton warns North Korea against nuclear ambitions

SEOUL, Nov 22: After warning North Korea to forsake nuclear weapons, President Bill Clinton praised American troops on Sunday for remaining vigilant near the world's most heavily guarded border where tensions are on the rise, reports AP.

"Our ability to succeed in promoting peace is uniquely due to the fact that we can back up our diplomatic efforts when necessary with military strength and that depends on you," Clinton told cheering US sailors, soldiers and marines stationed at Osan Air Base on the Korean Peninsula.

The president said that although recent US attention has focused on the threat from Iraq and its weapons programme, the tensions with North Korea because of its suspected nuclear ambitions "remain an area of great concern."

"Lately signs of danger have intensified with incursions from the North, provocative missile tests and the question

of a suspected underground (nuclear) installation," Clinton said. "So we must remain vigilant. And thanks to you we are."

Standing before a red banner bearing the "Black Cat" emblem of the 5th Reconnaissance Squadron, which flies America's U-2 spy planes, Clinton addressed a crowd of at least 1,000 military personnel and their families huddled in parkas against the cold.

Behind Clinton, a row of F-16 fighter jets and A-10 Warthog ground-attack planes stood as a reminder of the US security commitment to South Korea in the face of any challenge from the Communist North.

Earlier, Clinton helicoptered to the Korean Training Centre 13-km from the tense demilitarised zone. He shook hands with tank crews, pinned a promotion on a private and led troops in singing happy birthday to a sergeant major. He then joined soldiers for

lunch. The president began the day at chapel services at the US Army headquarters for Korea at Yongson Base in Seoul.

Clinton spoke on Saturday of a "strong suspicion" that an underground construction project in the Communist North that is barred from US inspection is nuclear related.

Saying the United States has an "unshakable alliance" with Seoul, Clinton urged North Korea to seize "an historic opportunity for peace extended by South Korea's President Kim Dae-jung in his policy of engagement with his neighbour."

Kim said North Korea "is cautiously but noticeably taking measures to increase interaction and cooperation." But Kim, in office less than a year, said he and Clinton agreed that "we will not tolerate any possible attempt of North Korea to proliferate nuclear weapons, missiles and other weapons of mass destruction."

Austria tightens security at US missions in Vienna

VIENNA, Nov 22: Austria has tightened security at US missions in Vienna after receiving information about possible guerrilla attacks, Interior Minister Karl Schloegl said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Schloegl was quoted by the Austrian news agency APA as saying the measures had been taken following indications that an attack was planned.

Austria had been in close contact with US authorities for several weeks about indications that an attack on a US-linked organisation in the Austrian capital was being planned, he said.

"Our authorities consider it a credible threat," said a US embassy spokeswoman, adding that security at all US government facilities in Vienna, which houses several United Nations organisations, had been increased.

The US State Department said on Friday its embassy in Vienna had received "credible" information about a possible "terrorist" act in the near future

against US-affiliated facilities in Austria.

It referred to a US warning on November 12 about possible retaliatory attacks against Americans and American interests.

This was made in light of tension with Iraq, the August 7 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the indictment in New York of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, who US authorities believe was behind the bombings.

The road on which the US embassy lies — Boltzmanngasse in Vienna's fashionable ninth district — has been closed to traffic as one of a series of measures triggered by the November 12 warning, an official at the interior ministry's security directorate said.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright wrote to Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schuessel to thank the Austrian government for the extra security, particularly at the embassy which was exposed due to its proximity to the street.

FM praises armed forces' role in UN peace-keeping

COMILLA, Nov 22: Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad said here today that the internationally acclaimed role of our armed forces in the peace keeping activities of the United Nations is a matter of pride for the country, reports BSS.

Azad was addressing a reception as the chief guest on the occasion of Armed Forces Day '98 yesterday at Comilla Cantonment.

The foreign minister said on this day the members of our armed forces take fresh vow to protect the motherland through unity and sacrifice. He termed the Armed Forces Day as an immortal milestone in safeguarding our independence, sovereignty and national integrity.

The reception was also addressed by Comilla Area Commander and GOC Brigadier A N M Fazlur Rahman. The foreign minister exchanged greetings with the officers.

PM's 'no-hartal' call hailed

The Khulna Divisional Inland River Transport Owners Group has hailed the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's decision not to call hartal any more in the country, reports BSS.

In a statement the president of the group Nur-e-Alam Chowdhury Lito, MP and secretary general Abdul Haim Khan said that 87 per cent of the population are against hartal. They also appealed to all the political parties and trade unions not to resort to hartal any more in the country.

One gets 10 yrs' RI for keeping arms in Jessore

JESSORE, Nov 22: One person was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment here in an arms case, court sources said today, reports UNB.

The prosecution story, in brief, was that police in a raid arrested Rabiul Islam, son of Goldar of village Krishnagar in Bagerpara on May 12, 1996 and recovered one country made pipegun and some ammunition of 202 bore rifle from his possession.

Police after investigation submitted a charge-sheet against Rabiul.

Patients' welfare assoc formed

HABIGANJ, Nov 22: Patients' Welfare Association, a social service organisation, was formed here in a meeting held recently at Civil Surgeon's office, reports BSS.

Dr Shafiq Uddin Ahmed, Civil Surgeon, presided over the meeting.

In the meeting elected Dr Shafiquddin Ahmed and Advocate Shahidur Rahman Khan, president and secretary respectively of the welfare association.

Opposition urges US to link aid to Pakistan with democracy

ISLAMABAD, Nov 22: Hoping to pressure the government to back off its plans to impose a harsh Islamic order in Pakistan, leading opposition lawmakers on Sunday urged the United States to link all new aid to Islamabad to assurances the country will remain democratic, reports AP.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif introduced a constitutional amendment in August to scrap all remaining British laws in Pakistan and replace them with laws based on the Muslim holy book, the Koran.

The bill "... will concentrate all powers into the hands of the prime minister, degrade women and remove all protections for ethnic and religious minorities," the opposition lawmakers said Sunday in a letter to US President Bill Clinton.

The lawmakers' Party told Clinton that any future economic assistance to Pakistan should be contingent on the country taking concrete steps to improve democracy, creating a free and impartial judiciary and allowing an unbiased investigation into charges of corruption and tax evasion lodged against Sharif.

Under Sharif's regime, there has been a systematic dismantling of democratic institutions, they said.

Sharif should not be "rewarded for the abuse of power," they wrote.

Sharif is scheduled to meet US President Bill Clinton on Dec 2 in Washington and ask him to lift the economic sanctions it imposed on Pakistan since the country's nuclear tests in May.

The sanctions have shaken Pakistan's already fragile economy, forcing it to scramble to raise funds to avoid defaulting on debt repayment.

Israeli army destroys Hamas leaders' hide-out

HEBRON, Nov 22: The Israeli army demolished a house Sunday used as a hide-out by two fugitive Hamas leaders before they were killed by Israeli troops earlier this year, reports AP.

Adel and Imad Awadallah were wanted by Palestinian authorities and Israel for alleged involvement in attacks that killed at least five Israelis and wounded 51 more.

After several weeks of searches, the army found and killed the two brothers in a rented home on the outskirts of the West Bank city of Hebron on Sept 11.

The owner of the home, Akram Mussauda was arrested shortly after by Israel for harbouring fugitives.

Israel has destroyed dozens of Palestinian homes over the last several years, either as a means of collective punishment for families of militants, or because the homes were built without permits.

An Israeli army spokesman said Sunday that the empty home, surrounded by vineyards and peach trees, was illegal since it had been built without Israeli permission.

Two bulldozers guarded by dozens of Israeli soldiers destroyed the house as Mussauda's two brothers looked on.

New setback for Japanese coalition

TOKYO, Nov 22: Japanese politics was thrown into new confusion today when the leader of a party that formed a surprise coalition with Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said that in principle parliament should be dissolved to hold general elections, reports Reuters.

The Liberal Party's Ichiro Ozawa also put to rest world financial market speculation that the coalition would mean dramatic economic change when he said there was no agreement to cut or suspend the nation's sales tax in a pact worked out with Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Giving the Liberal Party's first public account of agreements in the deal, Ozawa said he had no personal ambition to be a member of a new Cabinet, or even prime minister, unless there was a groundswell of demands for him to lead the nation.

Commenting on speculation that the LDP may try to wiggle out of some of the more sensitive parts of the agreement, Ozawa said in an interview with Asahi Television.

"These are all agreed to by the highest office, the prime minister of Japan. I believe that

the promises will be kept, and if they are not, we will cancel the coalition."

An opinion poll on Sunday in the Asahi Shimbun newspaper said 45 per cent of respondents opposed the coalition while 29 per cent supported it.

The survey of 1,561 voters also showed support for Obuchi had sunk to 21 per cent, the lowest level since it was formed last July when Obuchi won the leadership of the LDP.

Ozawa said because of weeks of economic and political upheaval in Japan, the electorate wanted a chance to vote on changes now instead of waiting until the next scheduled lower house election in mid-2000.

"I believe that parliament should be dissolved immediately and general elections should be called," he said. Prime Minister Obuchi understands that too," Ozawa said.

Ozawa said he understood the government may not be able to carry it out immediately because of the urgency of economic recovery, but that it should be done "as soon as possible."

In the economy in the state that it is at the moment, I understand that everything can't be done at once. But it should be done in the earliest possible time frame," he said.

Obuchi and Ozawa made a surprise announcement last Thursday to form a coalition which would help the LDP pass legislation to pull Japan out of its worst recession.

The coalition would create a stronger power base for the LDP, which has a comfortable majority in the 500-seat house of Representatives, or the lower house, but lacks a majority in the 252-seat upper house, or House of Councillors.

The LDP, with 104 seats in the upper house, will still be short of a majority because the Liberals have only 12 seats.

But the LDP expects to easily win the support of independents and smaller parties to make up the remaining 11-seat gap.

Financial markets rose on the news because of speculation that the LDP might accept Ozawa's view that a five per cent sales tax should be cut or suspended to spur consumer demand.

More donations to PM's Relief Fund

Assistance to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the country's flood victims continued to flow in from abroad with the latest amount of Tk 19.97 lakh and 81312 US dollar, reports UNB.

According to an official handout, Mauritius government donated US dollar 50,000, Bangladesh Association in Auckland and Canterbury in New Zealand NZ dollar 7,450, Bangladesh nationals in Saudi Arabia over Tk 17.07 lakh and 25,000 US dollar while Bangladesh Community in Oman Tk 2.90 lakh for the country's flood victims.

It said Bangladesh expatriates living in Portugal donated 5000 US dollar which was followed by 612.08 US dollar by Bangladesh nationals in Brussels, 500 US dollars by Bangladeshi expatriates in Egypt and 200 US dollar by Dr Moeen Panni in Kuala Lumpur.

Directives to maintain standard of Milk Vita products

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Bir Bikram, yesterday paid a surprise visit to Bangladesh Milk Production Cooperatives Union (Milk Vita) at Mirpur, reports BSS.

The state minister expressed satisfaction to see the working atmosphere, neat and clean environment and attendance of workers in the factory.

Maya directed the concerned authorities to maintain the standard of qualities of its products and expand activities of the Milk Vita programmes by setting up more factories in different districts of the country.

He went round the pasteurised process of liquid milk and ice-cream production of the factory.

Chairman of Milk Vita Habi Khan Tarun, general manager Gabinda Chandra Saha, president of Sramik Karmachari Union Mohammad Bellal Hossain, among others, accompanied the state minister.

JCD leader held in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Nov 22: A local leader of the opposition BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal was arrested here this noon, reports APB.

Police picked up Milon Rahman, a district committee member of JCD, from a tea-stall under the Iliot bridge in the town at about 12:30 pm.

With his arrest, police nabbed 19 leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations during the last 16 days.

Six dacoities committed in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Nov 22: Armed robbers committed six dacoities on Thursday night at different places in the district, mounting a sense of insecurity among the local people, reports APB.

Local sources said nearly a dozen dacoits entered the house of one Shariful Islam at Pabhati in the poura area. They looted valuables worth about Tk 50,000 and decamped with the booty.

Another gang of some 20 bandits committed robbery at the house of one Rabin Karmakar of Rontoil village in Sadar thana and snatched away belongings worth Tk 50,000.

Gangsters numbering 10 also swooped the houses owned by Anser Biswas, Abhir Mistry and Gobinda Biswas at Gopinathpur village in Sadar thana and looted valuables worth Tk 40,000.

They fatally injured one — Uttam Kumar, 24, when he tried to resist them. He was rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

Another group of hoodlums forcibly took away a motorcycle from a BRAC office in Kalliganj town.

Ironically, two of the looters riding the motorcycle met an accident off the town. Local people caught one — Abdul Kader — and handed him over to police.

Separate cases were lodged with Sadar and Kalliganj police stations in these connections.

Bangladeshi student stands 3rd in qirat contest

A Bangladeshi madrasa student stood third in the fourth group in the 20th international qirat competition, organised by the Religious Affairs Ministry in Mecca recently, said a message received here yesterday, reports BSS.



Shahidul Alam is receiving the third annual Howard Chapnick Grant for Advancement of Photojournalism. The award was presented to him in a ceremony held recently at the International Centre of Photography in New York. Alam was awarded 5,000 US dollar for preparatory work in setting up a South Asian Institute of Photography, called Pathshala.

State elections to represent vote of confidence in BJP's economic policies

MUMBAI, Nov 22: Indian state elections this week will, to a significant extent, represent a vote of confidence in the economic policies of the country's Hindu nationalist-led coalition government, analysts say, reports AFP.

New Delhi city and three states will be going to the polls to elect new local governments on the back of two-year economic slowdown, rising inflation and runaway price hikes in staple foods.

The coalition led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has failed to deliver on promises of political stability and economic growth since coming to power in March.

The BJP is the incumbent ruler in New Delhi and the northern state of Rajasthan, while the main opposition Congress controls the other two states going to the polls — Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram.

Pre-poll surveys indicate voters are disillusioned with the BJP's inability to live up to the expectations it generated during campaigning for the March national polls.

"In a way the elections will be a referendum on the BJP's economic performance. They had raised a lot of expectations, but their performance has been below par, so we expect some significant reverses," said stock broker Ajit Ambani.

Ambani said the general impression in trade and industry circles was that the Congress Party, which has ruled India for the majority of its 50 years of independence, was better at economic management.

"The Congress was more focused on issues and they knew how to go about it," he said.

India has been going through an economic slowdown since October 1996, about the time when political instability pulled down the centrist-leftist coalition of the day.

Economic growth fell to five per cent in the year to March 1998, down from 7.5 per cent the previous year.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha recently announced a raft of measures to revive the economy and the sagging capital markets which are believed to have about 28 billion dollars of market capitalisation in the past six months.

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36 cyclones

A recent survey of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology showed that 80 lakh people of 1.01 crore population in the coastal areas live in the vulnerable areas.

The report recommended setting up 2,500 cyclone shelters for the vulnerable people as they face the natural calamities almost every year.

At present, there are more than 1,300 cyclone shelters in the vulnerable areas. But many of them have become unfit for use as those were constructed long ago.

Red Crescent and government officials said some 10 lakh people took shelter at the cyclone shelters after the great danger signal number 10 was hoisted on May 19, 1997.

Because of early warning and evacuation of the inhabitants, the casualty figure was low. Some 200 people died in the cyclonic storm. But hundreds of houses, property and crops worth crores of taka were damaged in the coastal belt of greater Chittagong.

The cyclone on April 29, 1991 killed at least 1,38,866 people. It also affected 1.07 crore people in 95 thanas and 8 municipal areas of 18 districts.

The cyclone had also destroyed standing crops on 98,113 acres totally and 6,22,384 acres partially. Some 7,88,081 houses were totally damaged and 8.5 lakh houses partially. And 8,000 educational institutions were damaged. Some 10.3 lakh cattle were perished in the cyclone.

The damage to crops in 1991 cyclone was estimated at Tk 11,477 crore, to educational institutions Tk 467 crore, to civil aviation Tk 3.20 crore and to Chittagong port Tk 500 crore.

And the total number of damaged bridges and culverts was 496.

According to available data, the cyclone death toll was 545 in 1996, 91 in 1995, 134 in 1994, 11,650 on May 25, 1985, and 19,279 on May 12, 1986.

Unofficial death toll in the 1970 forke was 10 lakh while officially it was five lakh.

Some 11,520 people were killed by cyclone on May 28, 1965 and 3,000 others on October 9, 1960.

Ershad condoles death of six people in Rangpur

Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad has expressed concern at the death of six people in Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) following the use of date-expired intravenous saline, reports APB.

In a condolence message yesterday, the JP chief said he was perturbed as the government was yet to take any step in resolving the problems of RMCH despite his meeting with the health minister in this regard.

Making a renewed call for removing the existing problems of the hospital immediately, the former President hoped that all concerned should be careful so that there was no recurrence of such tragic incident.

Ershad expressed his deep shock and sorrow at the death of six people, prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved families.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer Facilities Department, Ministry of Education Naogaon Zone, Naogaon Tender Notice

No-60 (T)/Development/Pri/EE/FD/Naog-2/98-99 Dated: 12.11.98

Sealed tenders in Bangladesh Form No 2911 are hereby invited for reconstruction of government primary schools mentioned below under a project titled "Government Primary School Reconstruction and Renovation."

- a. Name of educational institution: Chuniagari GPS, Sadar, Naogaon.
b. Estimated cost: 5,95,000/- (Taka five lakh ninety-five thousand) only.
c. Earnest money: 11,900/- (Eleven thousand nine hundred) taka only.
d. Cost of each set of tender documents: 400/- (four hundred) taka (non-refundable).
e. Time limit for completion of work: 60 (sixty) days.
f. Last date and time of purchasing tender document: 08.12.98 (till office hours).
g. Last date and time of submitting tender document: 10.12.98 (till 1.00 PM).
h. Last date and time of opening tender documents: 10.12.98 (till 1-30 PM).
i. Offices where tender documents will be available and received: Offices of the Deputy Commissioner, Naogaon, Executive Engineer, Facilities Department, Naogaon/Rajshahi/Bogra/Pabna/Rangpur/Kuriganj/Dinajpur/Fanchaghor and Assistant Engineer, Facilities Department, Naogaon and Joyuphat District office.
j. Earnest money in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favour of Executive Engineer, Facilities Department, Naogaon Zone, Naogaon will have submitted with each set of tender documents.

Terms and conditions: 1. Prior permission of purchasing tender documents will have to be taken from appropriate authority by producing the following papers in original copies and attested photocopies of all these papers will have to be submitted at the time of submitting tender documents.
a. Certificate of renewal of licence update.
b. Certificate of payment of income tax update.
c. VAT registration certificate.
2. The contractor cannot claim any sort of financial benefit if, under any circumstances, the work is cancelled or any kind of change occurs.