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Election in 7 pourasavas today

Election in seven municipalities of seven districts, stayed earlier by a court order, will be held today.

The High Court had ordered elections stayed in Kalapara of Patuakhali, Amtali of Barguna, Mehendiganj of Barisal, Bhola district headquarters, Islampur of Jamalpur, Sahrasti of Chandpur and Raozan of Chittagong for three months on March 25.

Later on April 1, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court commuted the sanctions to two weeks on the basis of "mis-petition." Election Commission officials told UNB.

A general holiday has been declared in the seven municipal areas.

A total of 110,905 voters, including 52,611 female, will cast their votes at 59 centres to elect their chairmen, general commissioners and commissioners to the reserved women seats.

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BNP policymakers divided over strategy for joining polls

The BNP policymakers yesterday discussed the party's political strategy for Meherpur-1 by-election, upcoming Upazila elections and current anti-government agitation, reports UNB.

Party sources said the policymakers were apparently divided over the strategy, some favouring joining the elections while others opting for intensified agitation.

BNP chairperson and leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia convened the meeting of the party's secretary general, vice-presidents, her advisory council and joint secretaries general at her 29 Minto Road official residence in the evening.

The meeting, chaired by her, lasted two hours from 7:45 pm and was adjourned till April 14.

Those who took part in the discussion included Shajahan Siraj, Mosharraf Hossain Shajahan, Shamsul Islam Khan, Abdul Momen and MM Rezaul Karim.

Meeting sources said the deliberations mainly focused on organisational matters and mapping out the strategy considering latest political and economic situation.

Meherpur by-polls Nine file nominations

MEHERPUR, Apr 11: Nine candidates filed nominations today for the Meherpur by-election, reports UNB.

None from BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami submitted nomination papers.

The candidates are Prof Abdul Manan (AL), Golam Rahman Biswas (JP Mizan-Manju), Mutasim Billah Motu (IND), Mohammad Hissab Uddin (IND), Advocate Monajuddin (Zaker Party), Dr Hashem Ali (IND), Abdul Hamid (JP-Ershad), Sadek Ali (Bangladesh Krishak Mukti Andolan) and Humayun Kabir Arzoo (IND).

Another report said: Jatiya Party at a meeting with H M Ershad in the chair has decided to put up candidate in the Meherpur by-election. It nominated Abdul Hamid to contest the polls.

Inside Today Article

Declaration of Palestinian State

Column: Spotlight on Middle East by Muslehuddin Ahmad Page 4

Business

DCCI for withdrawing tax provision on export income

India to allow private free trade zones

DSE, CSE price quotations Pages 8, 9 & 10

Prayer Timings April 12

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-30	4-35
Maghrib	6-20	6-23
Esha	7-30	7-35

Source: Islamic Foundation

Li Peng arrives today

By M Anwarul Haq



Li Peng

A red carpet reception will be accorded to Chairman of the National People's Congress of China Li Peng when he arrives in the capital today.

A special aircraft will carry the Chinese leader to Zia International Airport at 2.20 pm on a two-day official visit to Bangladesh. He will lead a 120-member delegation.

Li Peng, now on a six-nation tour, is coming from Pakistan after visiting Turkey, Greece and Syria. He will leave Dhaka tomorrow for Bangkok.

On arrival at ZIA, he will be received by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury. He will be presented a guard of honour.

He will then be driven straight to the Jatiya Smriti Soudha at Savar.

Li Peng is one of the most important visitors to Bangladesh.

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Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bengali new year 1406, is only a day away. A student of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University paints masks yesterday as part of preparations for the traditional procession to be brought out to celebrate the day.

Water crisis, loadshedding No remedy in sight

By Sharier Khan

The authorities partially restored power supply on makeshift basis in some areas of the old city yesterday but frequent power disruption continued to increase miseries of the citizens.

Sources concerned said that power supply would continue to be 'unstable for an uncertain period' as an age old 'breaker' in Siddhirganj, which was used for control of power load in the National Grid, went out of order on Thursday.

"As the breaker is outdated, Power Development Board is unable to replace the damaged components soon," one source said.

Loadshedding in the city yesterday was not less than 300 MW, which is nearly one third of the demand for power, the source pointed out.

In addition, due to poor flow of power from the power stations, disruption took place frequently in the city. Almost all areas of the city suffered power disruption once or twice for hours yesterday.

In the old city, where people became agitated due to power and water crises and attacked the offices of WASA and DESA on Saturday, power supply was partially restored in some areas yesterday. But in a number of city areas like Khilgaon, Goran, Madartek, Basabo, Kadamtola, Sabulbagh, Ahmedbagh, Mayakanon, Mugdapara, Maniknagar, Gopibagh and Dhalpur remain without power for about 20 hours a day. As a result, there has also been an

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City's 38 ward commissioners condemn police 'atrocities'

By Staff Correspondent

Thirty-eight ward commissioners of Dhaka City Corporation have expressed deep concern at serious electricity, water and gas crises in the capital and strongly condemned police "atrocities" on the protesting city dwellers.

In a joint statement, the commissioners belonging to opposition BNP said thousands of people brought out a series of processions and staged demonstrations demanding smooth supply of water, electricity and gas on Saturday, but police fired shots and teargas shells indiscriminately and charged batons leaving hundreds of people injured.

They demanded punitive measures against persons responsible for attack on Saturday.

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Confrontational politics, worsening law & order Investors feel discouraged, EU envoys tell business leaders

By Staff Correspondent

European Union envoys at a meeting with the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) yesterday said that foreign investors were feeling discouraged to invest in Bangladesh because of political instability, bureaucratic corruption, deteriorating law and order and lack of infrastructure.

They said that many investors from EU came to the country with great interest but they pulled out without investing anything due to these reasons.

The eight-member EU delegation included the High Commissioner of UK and ambassadors of Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and European Union.

Following a two-hour meeting with the EU team, MCCI President Mahubul Jamil and its Secretary General of MCCI CK Haider told newsmen that the EU delegation was "neither happy, nor sorry" about the country's situation. But they were "worried" over the country's unstable and deteriorating socio-political situation and they felt that their feelings should be conveyed to persons concerned.

"They are specially worried over the confrontational politics," said CK Haider, quoting

sadors of Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and European Union.

"If the two major parties do not consider having some different approach to each other, the investment climate would worsen further."

"For historical reasons, many member countries of the EU are in a better position to understand our society, appreciate our difficulties and evaluate our development potential which is not reflected by statistics and economic data," Mahubul Jamil said.

"They said that EU would continue to help Bangladesh, but the government must show more commitment," CK Haider said quoting the delegation.

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300 murdered, 230 kidnapped & 90 raped in Ctg in 5 yrs

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Apr 11: Around 300 people were murdered in the port city in incidents related with political violence and other crimes during the last five years, police sources said.

Of them, 73 people were killed in 1998, 60 in '97, 68 in '96, 51 in '95, 28 in '94 and about 20 in over three months of this year (99).

About 230 people were abducted during this period and they later got released either on payment of ransom or due to police action, the sources added.

Over 90 rape cases were also recorded by police during the period.

Incidents of dacoity, robbery, burglary and theft recorded by police numbered around 3,000. Of those, about 2,000 were theft cases.

Incidents of theft and burglary marked an increase in the city recently, police and residents said.

Three sensational dacoities took place recently, of these one at the residence of Chairman of Chittagong Development Authority and two at Medical Staff Quarters. Police arrested some suspects but could not recover the goods.

Besides, incidents of mugging and illegal toll collection continued.

The crackdown launched in the city at different times hardly proved effective as most of the arrested ring leaders and members of crime syndicates operating in the city got release on bail, raising concern both among police and residents.

When contacted, Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Ahmedul Haq Chowdhury said that efforts were underway to re-arrest the "identified" terrorists and criminals and their ring leaders. "Police is keeping watch on their activities and new records on them are being prepared".

He added that a 'prosecution task force' also was formed, headed by ADC Golam Mostafa to pursue important cases in the court to check the release of arrested terrorists.

The task force has started maintaining liaison between thana and court in this regard to provide necessary materials against the identified criminals, the Commissioner said.

Ctg city BNP observes hartal

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 11: Chittagong city BNP observed a half-day hartal today.

The hartal was called protesting deterioration of law and order, power and water crisis and price hike of essentials.

Vehicles except some rickshaws were off the roads. Educational institutions, commercial centres and business establishments remained closed during the hartal.

Cargo handling at the Chittagong port was also hampered.

City BNP and its front organisations held a meeting at Laldighi Crossing during hartal with city BNP president Mir Nasiruddin in the chair. The speakers in the meeting warned of a tougher agitation programme if the situation did not improve. The meeting was followed by a procession.

Chhatak blast: CID interrogates MP

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Apr 11: The CID has started interrogating ruling party MP Muhibur Rahman Manik at his residence at Chhatak this afternoon.

Investigating Officer ASP Aminul Islam of the CID, Comilla Zone, who is also in-charge of Sylhet Zone interrogated him, an official said. The senior SP of CID from Dhaka, Quazi Bazlur Rahman, was also with him, he informed.

ASP Aminul is being assisted by Inspector Gopal Chakravarty of Sylhet and Inspector Enayetur Rahman of Sunamganj district. Till yesterday, the investigating officer had interrogated about 30 persons including the elder brother of the MP and his wife, who were staying on the ground floor of the building at the time of the blast. He also talked to the neighbours, family members of both the youngmen killed in the blast, leaders of rival groups of local Awami League and government officials who had visited the spot just after the incident.

However, a cousin of the MP - Abul Lais Chowdhury - who was critically injured in the blast and had been in Sylhet M A G Osmani Medical College Hospital is yet to open his mouth "on the plea of indisposition." He was shown arrested after 11 days of the blast. The physicians in the hospital yesterday hoped that condition at

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Shafi murder CID questions AC Kabir: Probe report not submitted

By Staff Correspondent

Investigators yesterday interrogated assistant commissioner Humayun Kabir for the second time in four days at the CID headquarters yesterday.

The questioning continued almost all day yesterday. Kabir, now serving at the Chittagong Metropolitan Police, until recently headed the DB team whose members are suspected to have been behind the killing of Jahan Ahmed Shafi.

The assistant commissioner, summoned from Chittagong on April 7 when he was first interrogated, has been told not to leave Dhaka without permission, CID sources said.

Meanwhile, the five-member probe committee, scheduled to submit its report to the IGP yesterday, did not submit the report till late last night.

The committee had originally been asked to submit its report to the IGP on April 4. Later, the committee asked for seven more days. When contacted last night, a member said the probe committee was preparing the report but could not finish it due to the frequent power failure.

In another development, the Detective Branch has decided not to bring suspects to the in-

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'Killers of Kazi Aref identified'

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Apr 11: Killers of Kazi Aref Ahmed have been identified and CID has completed all formalities to submit charge sheet against them.

This was disclosed by Mohammad Anwar Hossain, SP of Kushtia, at the monthly review meeting of the district law and order committee today.

Held at the Kushtia Collectorate Hall here, the meeting was presided by Deputy Commissioner of Kushtia.

Hossain reportedly told a committee member at the meeting that CID ASP Nabakumar Das has prepared all the papers in connection with the murder of JSD central leader and four others at public meeting at Kalidaspur Primary School ground under Daulatpur thana on February 16.

To improve law and order in the district, the government has decided to set up 23 permanent police camps headed by one SI. Each camp will have 24 police personnel with modern weapons to deal with the armed terrorists, he said. Phensidyl, foreign liquor and different kinds of drugs as well as arms are coming into the district through various border points and are being sold here indiscriminately, he said.

While reviewing the crime incidents in the district in March it was revealed that a total of 141 cases have been recorded as against 106 in February.

In January, total crimes recorded in six thanas of the district were 132.

DU tense as BCL faction captures hall

By DU Correspondent

Tension gripped Dhaka University campus as a faction of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) captured Zahurul Haq Hall yesterday ousting their rival group.

Police guarding the hall did not intervene although at least 10 rounds of bullets were fired, witnesses said.

Campus sources said both the feuding groups of the ruling party's student organisation are now trying to establish their dominance in the hall.

The sources said a group of activists backed by BCL faction of Ratan-Tommye stormed into Zahurul Haq Hall at about 7 am and took the control of the hall by ousting rival faction of Shamim Ahmed.

Insiders said Babu, president of Zahurul Haq Hall unit of BCL, played the key role in capturing the hall. Babu, who was earlier the activist of Shamim group, was ousted by 'Tokai' Mizan about four months back over distribution of extorted money.

Babu had been staying in Mohsin Hall since then. However, he entered Zahurul Haq Hall at about 3 am through the dining room. At around 7 am, he asked his fellow activists waiting at Sir AF Rahman and Mohsin halls to attack the hall over his mobile phone.

Soon after, a group of about 15 men led by Shahidul, Hemayet and Jewel swooped on the hall and took position.

The attackers fired at least 10 rounds of gunshots and forced their rivals to leave the dormitory at gunpoint.

'Terrorist' beaten to death on Rajshahi College campus

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 11: The students of Rajshahi Govt College today vacated their respective dormitories following tension over murder of an alleged terrorist on the college campus at midnight last night.

The victim was identified as Aminul Islam Modhu, son of Amir Ali of Dargahpara in the city.

Police said, Modhu along with his three associates went to Room No B-18 of the Muslim Hostel at around 11-30 pm and demanded Tk 4000 from the inmates at gun point.

Hearing hue and cry, other students of the dormitory rushed to the spot and chased the three.

They caught Modhu while the two others managed to flee. The students beat up Modhu mercilessly and he succumbed to injuries on way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Some agitated people from Dargahpara, a den of terrorists, today attacked and ransacked the offices of the college.

The College Staff Council held an emergency meeting soon after the incident and asked the students to vacate their hostels immediately.

Police arrested four students - Ahad, Shahidul Karim, Sikder Humayun Kabir and Sadakuzzaman Shaikat - from the campus today in connection with the killing.

Modhu was an accused in six cases, including terrorism and toll collection, police said.

Pakistan plans 'befitting' response

NEW DELHI, Apr 11: India tested a new generation of nuclear-capable missile today, adding range, mobility and punch to its defense network in defiance of international appeals to put its nuclear programme on hold, reports AP.

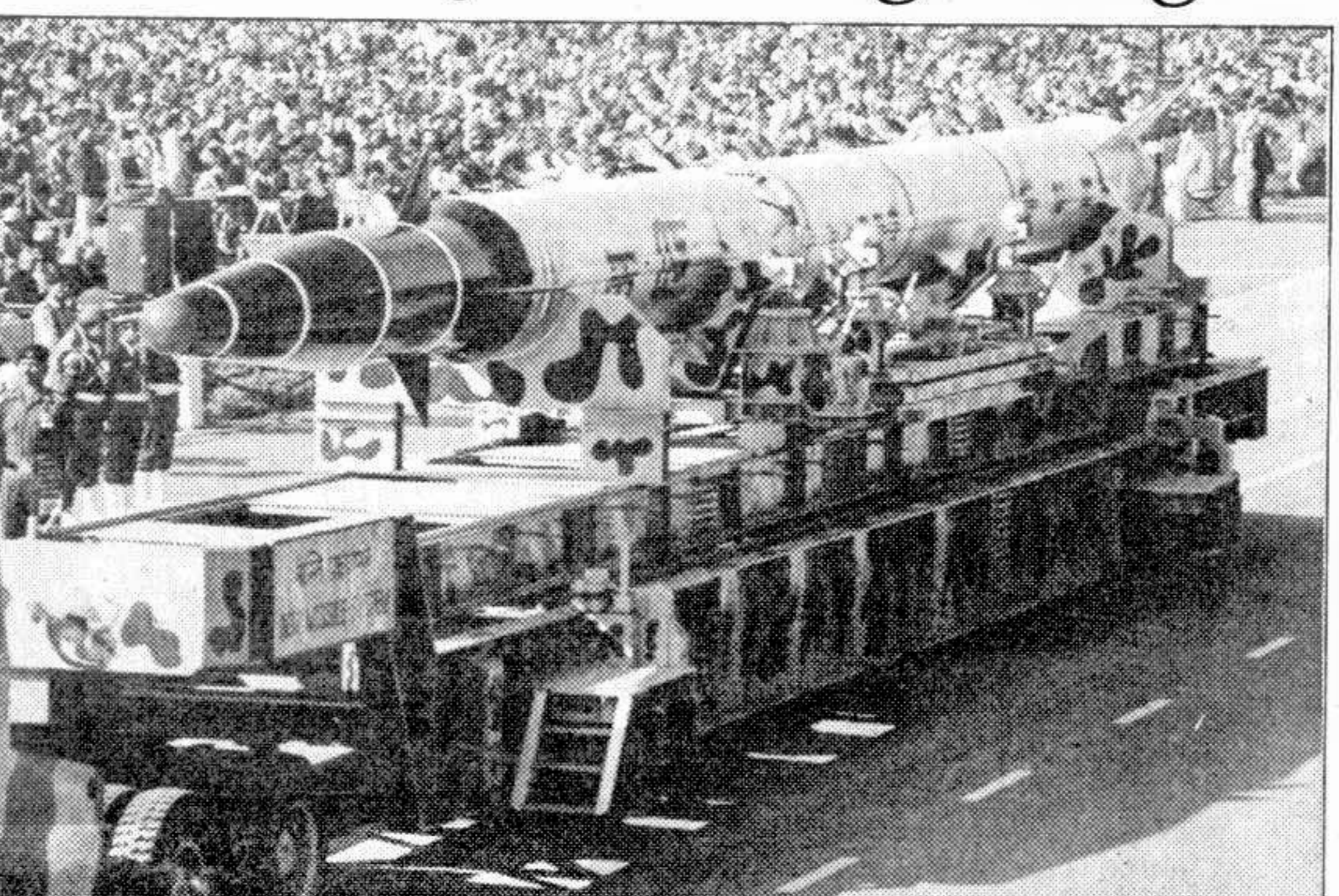
The launch of the Agni II missile, the first test in five years of India's most powerful weapons system, immediately prompted worry from Pakistan and the United States and raised concerns of another round in the nuclear arms race.

Defense Minister George Fernandes said the test put the Agni project on an operational level and put India in the forefront of missile technology. "Today is a great day for India," he said.

Fernandes brushed aside questions about the political

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India testfires long-range N-missile



This file photo dated 26 January, 1999 shows an Agni intermediate range ballistic missile being towed past the presidential dais during India's annual Republic Day parade. India yesterday tested its latest Agni-II (Fire II) ballistic missile exactly 11 months after it carried out a series of nuclear tests.

— AFP photo