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Pakistan vows to retaliate, puts forces on high alert

India launches air strikes to flush out Kashmir militants

NEW DELHI, May 26: India today launched its first peacetime air strikes in Kashmir and warned Pakistan not to interfere as New Delhi used force to dislodge guerrillas, report agencies.

Pakistan, meanwhile, puts its forces on high alert, as the military warned the crisis could snowball into a wider conflict.

Indian air force fighter jets and helicopter gunships today fired on the mountains of India-held Kashmir to flush out Pakistani-backed infiltrators entrenched along their disputed

frontier.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz immediately told India: "We are retaliating and we will retaliate." He didn't elaborate.

In New Delhi, American ambassador Richard Celeste met with Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes and expressed his country's concern over the developments.

However, Celeste ruled out the possibility of an American intervention. Press Trust of India agency quoted him as saying: "No way, there is no ques-

tion of this," Celeste said.

Earlier, India warned Pakistan today that it would take "appropriate action" if Islamabad intervened in its air

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strikes.

"Should there be any direct or indirect interference in our operations by Pakistan army or Pakistan air force, the Indian defence forces have been authorised to take appropriate action," an official statement

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BNP, allies to observe 'black day' today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance observes 'Black Day' today as Jyotirindra Bodhipriyo Larma allies Shantu Larma takes over as chairman of the CHT Regional Council at a ceremony at the Tribal Cultural Institute at Rangamati.

In observance of the day, BNP and its allies — Jatiya Party, Jamaat and IOJ — are scheduled to organise separate public rallies and processions in the city and elsewhere in the country to press their demand for scrapping of the "uneven and unconstitutional" CHT accord which is "a threat to the national sovereignty."

In the capital, BNP will hold a rally at Paltan Maidan at 4 pm. The rally will be followed by a procession.

Jatiya Party will hold a rally in front of its Kalabagan central office at 4 pm while Jamaat at Muktagon at 4.30 pm. IOJ will also organise similar programme on the occasion.

Vajpayee to visit Bangladesh on June 19

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will visit Bangladesh in the third week of June, official sources said yesterday, reports BSS.

Acting Foreign Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed said Vajpayee will arrive here on June 19.

His (Vajpayee's) visit is linked to the inauguration of a regular bus service between Dhaka and Calcutta," Mohiuddin added.

It will be his first visit to Bangladesh as prime minister. He first visited Dhaka as the foreign minister of Morarji Desai government in late '70s.

The trial run of the Dhaka-Calcutta bus service took place in April.

TODAY IN
Rising Stars



MORE CRICKETERS' POSTERS

Inside Today

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The Heart of the Matter

Syed Talat Hussain writes from Islamabad

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Focus

The myth of party system; and Growing antibiotic resistance in Bangladesh

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Prayer Timings

May 27

Larma takes over as RC chief amid tight security today

From Shebab Ahmed

RANGAMATI, May 26: Au-

thorities have tightened security in the town ahead of to-

morrow's installation of Jy-

otirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma

as Chairman of the CHT in-

term Regional Council.

The installation ceremony

will be held on the premises of the Tribal Cultural Institute here.

Larma will enjoy the status

of a state minister and have

wide powers to oversee func-

tioning of local governments,

law and order and development

activities in the three hill dis-

tricts.

The former guerrilla leader is

set to begin the job of a civilian

administrator amid planned

demonstrations by the settlers-

dominated Parbatty Gano

Parishad, backed by the Sar-

bodoliyo Oikkya Parishad,

which terms the day a 'black

day'.

They have called a shutdown

in the hill district tomorrow in

protest, saying that the RC, led

by Larma, would not represent

No upset on Bangladesh cards today

From Nizamuddin Ahmed

LONDON, May 26: Right-

hand batsman and medium-

pacer Neeyamur Rashid may be

playing against Australia at the

expense of left-arm spinner and

useful bat Enamul Hoque in

Bangladesh's match tomorrow at Chester-le-Street in Durham.

The playing eleven would

however be announced later

this evening after the meeting of the team selectors.

The change may have been

prompted by the ability of the

Australians to play good spinners

with the likes of Shane Warne giving them good practice.

The team had a practice in

the afternoon on the ground

they will be playing its fourth

match of the cricket World Cup.

Bangladesh lost to New Zealand by six wickets on May 17 at Chelmsford and to West Indies by seven wickets on May 21 at Dublin. They recorded a famous victory against all odds at Edinburgh on May 24 when they had the better of the hosts by 22 runs.

Bangladesh will play their

last group match against Pak-

istan at Northampton on May

26.

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5.2pc growth despite floods

Reeling out of devastating

floods, the country posted a 5.2

per cent growth this fiscal year

and the government adopted a

Tk 15,500 crore Annual Devel-

opment Programme for 1999-

2000 to further spur the econ-

omy, reports UNB.

The National Economic

Council (NEC) at a meeting yester-

day with Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina in the chair endor-

sed the increased ADP alloca-

tions. The size of the revised

ADP for the outgoing financial

year is Tk 14,000 crore.

Officials said the NEC noted

with satisfaction the growth

rate achieved in the 1998-99

fiscal despite the flood that

slowed down economic activity.

Economists and financial

experts of the country had pre-

dicted that the growth in 1998-

99 would hardly be 4 per cent

because of the prolonged floods

that hit the country in 1998

playing havoc with agriculture

and the economy at large.

The achieved growth in

1998-1999 is something spec-

tacular as the country faced

with serious setback during the

prolonged flooding last mon-

soon," the meeting said.

In the ADP outlay for 1999-

2000, local currency will

amount to Tk 8,830 crore or 57

per cent of the total. Project aid

is Tk 6,426 crore and food aid

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Press enjoying complete freedom now: PM

that freedom of the press also

entails responsibilities.

"You have to discharge your

duties faithfully to enjoy free-

dom. You must not push the

nation to uncertain situation by

your reports," she reminded the

journalists.

Sheikh Hasina lauded the

role of journalists during vari-

ous movements of the past, in-

cluding the movement for en-

suring people's franchise.

Your bold support had en-

couraged us in our struggle to at-

tain the rights to vote and food,"

she said.

The Prime Minister once

again thanked the Leader of the

Opposition for "her realisation"

that election was the only

means to go to power. She said

that elections would be held on

schedule.

I wanted to discuss with the

opposition to advance the elec-

tions dates when they were agi-

ted.

The Prime Minister said

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