

# Mahendra govt won't be restored: Fiji army chief

SUVA. May 31: Fiji's new military ruler said today there was no chance Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry's government, which is being held hostage in parliament, would resume its leadership of the Pacific island nation, reports AFP.

"Mahendra Chaudhry will no longer come back as prime minister," said Commodore Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama, who declared martial law on Monday and appointed a new interim prime minister in the early hours of Wednesday.

Bainimarama also announced Wednesday, in a surprise move, an indefinite postponement of the planned naming and swearing in of an interim civil administration.

"It is prudent at this point in time to retain (the) military council until the climate is right for a civil administration to take over," he told senior officers of Fiji's military headquarters.

"We will defer the naming and swearing in of the interim government until we are sure that the situation has stabilised to a point where they can... put in place a viable constitution and pave the way for the next general elections and the return to democratic rule," Bainimarama said.

The interim military government would be in place until

all the hostages were released and all arms had been returned to the army, the military chief added.

Bainimarama confirmed that George Speight, the coup leader who has held Chaudhry and his ministers hostage since May 19, will be allowed to walk free after the crisis is over.

"We've drawn up a decree that has been nearly finalised, granting an amnesty," he told reporters.

Despite the declaration of martial law, the scene outside the besieged parliament was chaotic Wednesday and it appeared the military was still completely unable to enforce control over the coup leaders.

Speight's armed supporters went on the rampage outside the building's rear entrance. Police confirmed that at least 10 cars were hijacked and driven inside the compound.

Their attack sent people and traffic scattering, and the area to the rear of parliament was deserted by mid-afternoon.

In a counter-move, the military reinforced its positions along the road to the front entrance of the building and increased barbed wire checkpoints around the city and trunk routes leading to the parliamentary complex.

Bainimarama Wednesday named Ratu Epeli Nailatikau -- a former army commander and

son-in-law of President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara -- as his prime minister in a government of non-aligned professionals.

Mara was forced to step down from office Monday as part of Speight's demands for the release of the hostages.

But Speight's spokesman Joe Nata said the choice of Nailatikau was completely unacceptable.

Bainimarama dismissed the coup plotters' reaction and made it clear that Speight's men, ethnic Indians and members of the deposed Chaudhry cabinet would not be included in the interim cabinet.

Diplomatic sources have told AFP that Chaudhry has made it clear to his captors that he is determined to resume power -- a defiant stance that has delayed his release.

Although Bainimarama's eight-member military council has not been named publicly, former prime minister and two-time coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka is believed to be playing a key role on it, according to diplomatic sources.

Meanwhile, one of the hostages, assistant minister to the prime minister's office Adi Ena Tagicakibau, was released Wednesday morning to attend her sister's funeral on condition she returned to the complex.

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Nigerian First Lady Stella Obasanjo (L) receives Indian beauty queen and Miss World Yukta Mookhey (R) at Abuja presidential villa Tuesday. Miss Mookhey, accompanied by her chaperon and International President Miss World Organisation Julia Morley (2nd R) and Guy Murray-Bruce (2nd L), came to Nigeria to support Stella Obasanjo's Child Care Trust project to raise fund for the purchase of echo-cardiogram machine to be used by Nigerian children for the early detection of heart disease.

— AFP photo

## Explosives seized in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, May 31: A large consignment of Pakistan-made explosives, including RDX and TNT, have been recovered here and an ULFA militant carrying them arrested, police said today.

This was the third major haul of RDX in the city during the past one year and the explosives were despatched here from the banned outfit's camps in Bodo to carry out subversive activities, the police said, adding the consignment included a sophisticated RDX fitted bomb, four packets of RDX, a bag of TNT, two anti-personnel landmines, 25 detonators, 30 rounds of 9mm pistol and eight of SLR.

7 jailed for importing Asian women in US

ATLANTA, May 31: Seven people who imported Asian women for use in prostitution and indentured servitude were sentenced to jail Tuesday, reports AP.

Two of the defendants, Yufeng Zhang and Meng Song Wang, have not been arrested and are considered fugitives.

The three men who ran what prosecutors called competing "brothels" received the longest sentences: To Ha Vuong, 33 months; Meng Fen Wang, 27 months; and Ninh Vinh Luong, 21 months. Workers from the operations ran by Vuong and Luong received sentences ranging from probation to 18 months in prison.

## India has capability to build cruise missile

WASHINGTON, May 31: India is among a select band of military powers in Asia who has the capability for domestic production of cruise missile, a defence publication reports, says PTI.

While 15 countries in Asia currently have cruise missiles in their inventory, only five of them -- India, China, North Korea, Japan and Taiwan -- have capabilities for domestic production, says Military Technology or Miltech, a German publication.

Comparing the India and Pakistan military programmes, the magazine says that New Delhi's ballistic missile efforts are more advanced and diversified than Islamabad's and they profit from the country's space programme which provides a concomitant infrastructure for current systems and a basis for future intercontinental ballistic missiles.

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