

India, Pakistan troops

FROM PAGE 1
assaults.
India on Sunday acknowledged that some of its elite military forces had mobilised near the border with Pakistan and said the military was in a state of "very high alert" amid rising tensions with its neighbour.
"It now came to a point that India had to take notice. This is when India had to bring its forces closer to the border both in Punjab and Rajasthan (states)," Defence Minister George Fernandes was quoted as saying by Press Trust of India.

"These include movement of some formation of strike forces," he told PTI in an interview.
Indian officials said part of the country's elite Strike Corps -- which specializes in penetrating enemy territory for an infantry attack -- were near the border.

The Pakistani army spokesman said Indian and Pakistani forces have exchanged fire across Siaching glacier -- the world's highest battlefield -- over the last three days.

"It's routine and not in the context of the recent build-up," Brigadier Raza said.

The Pakistani army spokesman said India initiated the attacks on Pakistani positions on the Siaching glacier over the past few days and Pakistan responded.

"Pakistan retaliated, causing damage to their artillery," he said. "There has been no exchanges (of fire) on the international border," he said referring to the non-Kashmiri frontier between the two countries.

Pakistan's air force chief said yesterday Pakistani defence forces were ready to give a matching response to any "misadventure" by India on its borders, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported. "There is nothing to be worried about -- Pakistan's armed forces are fully prepared," APP quoted Air Chief Marshal Mushaf Ali Mir as saying.

In the latest exchange of fire along the border, two Indian paramilitary guards were killed and three wounded when Pakistan troops opened fire on the border of the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, Indian officials said today.

The border clash took place at Bain Galahar, 40 kilometers southwest of Jammu, winter capital of India's Jammu-Kashmir state.

"This was an unprovoked action. We have taken serious note of it," a spokesman of the Border Security Force told The Associated Press on customary condition of anonymity.

"They could be Pakistani rangers but there appeared to be some regular army men."

There was no immediate reaction from Pakistan's army.
Also Sunday, India's army killed two suspected militants in Bandipora, 75 kilometers (46 miles) north of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir.

The two men have been identified as Pakistani nationals who belonged to guerrilla group Lashkar-e Tayyaba, army spokesman Mukhtar Singh said. One of the slain men is believed to be a top commander of Lashkar-e Tayyaba.

In Kabul, asserting that India did not have infinite patience, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh on Sunday said the recall of the Indian High Commissioner from Islamabad was only a signal to Pakistan that it recognised the enormity of the

situation after the attack on Indian parliament.

The step was only a signal, a message to Pakistan so that it recognises the enormity of the situation, Singh said when asked about New Delhi's decision on Saturday to recall High Commissioner Vijay Nambar.

Singh, who is representing India at the installation of the new interim government headed by Hamid Karzai, was talking to reporters after reopening the Indian Embassy.

He said the attack on the parliament was not just an attack on the stones and mortars of a building but on the very sovereignty of the country.

Singh ducked a question when asked whether India was considering a military option to deal with the situation saying "I am not in Kabul to discuss such options".

Meanwhile, Pakistan Sunday accused India of kidnapping and torturing a staff member with its high commission in New Delhi and said it had lodged an official protest with Indian authorities.

The foreign ministry said in a statement that Mohammad Sharif Khan, whose role at the embassy was not specified, was "kidnapped" Saturday by "Indian intelligence operatives" while he was shopping at a New Delhi market.

"During interrogation, he was stripped naked, severely beaten and tortured, resulting in visible and internal injuries. The medical report confirms that Mr Khan was ruthlessly beaten and tortured," it said.

The embassy worker was released after five hours, but was forced to sign a statement acknowledging involvement in espionage, it added.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has lodged a strong protest with the Indian High Commission in Islamabad over this reprehensible, provocative and unacceptable action on the part of the Indian government."

Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani will ask Washington to identify Pakistan as a "terrorist state" during a visit next month to the United States, he said in an interview published Sunday.

"I will obviously communicate our position and the detailed evidence we have. This leaves no doubt that Pakistan is a terrorist state," Advani told the Hindustan Times.

"I feel that the US has a clear choice and it cannot afford to have double standards. All terrorists are the same."

The hawkish home minister, who is India's cabinet number two, said he had told US Secretary of State Colin Powell that it was difficult for the Indian public to understand how Pakistan is part of the US-led "coalition against terrorism."

"This is a terrible dichotomy there," Advani said.

"The Indian government is fully committed to end the menace of terrorism. We have neither hesitated from taking any decision so far nor have our decisions been influenced by anyone," said Advani.

"We have been drawing the attention of world leaders towards the growing menace of terrorism. Our concern is that all countries should unitedly stand to end terrorism," he added.

US plane

FROM PAGE 12
"We are told the flight attendant was drawn to him by the smell of sulphur from a lit match, and then challenged him as to what he was doing," Kinton said.

He said the intervention of the flight attendant "appeared to have prevented something very serious from occurring."

The North American Air Defense Command ordered two F-15 fighter jets to escort the airliner after the explosives were discovered and the incident was reported to the Federal Aviation Administration, officials said.

Authorities said the 28-year old suspect, who was travelling alone and without any luggage, was being questioned by FBI agents. Investigators used an X-ray to examine his shoe and discovered enough explosives to create significant damage, Kinton said.

He described the explosive device as "improvised."

According to WHDH television, authorities describe the explosive device as C4, a plastic explosive used for both industrial and military purposes.

Mary Schiavo, a former Department of Transportation inspector general, said the suspect reportedly planned his action.

She said only sniffer dogs in Paris could have detected plastic explosives in the suspect's shoes.

Hasina: AL to reinstate

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ment.
The meeting in a resolution expressed sympathy for those killed in September 11 attacks on World Trade Centre in New York. It also sympathised with the victims of earthquake in Dhaka.

It praised the five-year rule of Awami League marked with self-sufficiency in food, highest GDP growth of 6.5 per cent, Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, CHT Peace Accord and socioeconomic development.

The meeting observed that Bangladesh would continue to have food autarky if the government pursued the steps taken by the Awami League regime.

About export of gas, the meeting noted that previous BNP government had signed agreement on gas without floating tender, while Awami League government did it through an open tender.

"BNP gave the ownership of gas fields to foreign companies while

Panthapath

FROM PAGE 1
the Mirpur road off-limits to rickshaws was called off last year when several hundred rickshawpullers protested the plan and fought a pitch battle with the police.

The DUTP sources said the plan does not envisage total ban on rickshaws in the city, but it aims at ensuring that such vehicles ply only on the lanes and by-lanes, leaving the main roads for fast-moving vehicles.

With the ban of rickshaws on the Panthapath road, passengers will have to use the Razabazar road as an alternative.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has already promised to open a new bus route from Mirpur to Motilhep through Panthapath and deploy about 50 buses.

Private entrepreneurs will also start bus service through the Panthapath road soon to facilitate cheap commuting, sources said.

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Duty slapped

FROM PAGE 1
milk, dry grape, plastic office equipment and paper and paper-board (multiply).

Items that will come under 15 per cent regulatory duty are fresh date and cooking appliances (gas and kerosene-run).

Importers now have to pay additional 20 per cent regulatory duty on import of mango, fresh grape, apple, chocolate, biscuit, jam, jelly, marmalade, different kinds of sauce and ketchup, shampoo, perfume and toilet water, tooth paste, toilet soap, plastic dolls, T-shirts, all kinds of shoes, sanitary wares, ceramic products, glass wares and imitation jewelry.

The authorities also imposed 20 per cent regulatory duty on import of some categories of toys and microbus below 1500cc. There will also be 25 per cent additional duty on import of microbus above 1500cc but below 3000cc.

Justifying the move the NBR Chairman said that due to liberal duty structure the country was flooded with unnecessary imports that even include below standard foreign products.

According to NBR sources, the commerce ministry sent a list to the NBR last month to impose regulatory duty on import of more than 50 items. However, NBR imposed additional duty on more than 30 items.

Speedy trial

FROM PAGE 1
Abdul Quayum, Solicitor of the Ministry of Law AKM Fazlur Rahman, DC of Dhaka M Abdul Aziz and other senior officials were among others present.

The meeting elaborately discussed various hurdles to disposal of cases. Problems of courts, ministries, departments and judges and lack of additional facilities, closely associated with quick disposal of cases, were identified as the deterrents.

The meeting decided to set priority of the problems in judicial process and also to hold such meeting again.

Deposed president HM Ershad aside, there is hardly any instance of political veterans of serving jail terms or other kinds of punishment.

In fact, the successive governments charged their opponents with criminal or corruption charges apparently with a political motive.

Corruption cases initiated at different times failed to live up to the mark as the authorities used such cases only to overcome political crisis or tame an agitating opposition. Furthermore, no government could ever complete the lengthy process of trial.

But the government defends its move as the one to fight corruption despite the fact that graft cases of political nature hardly saw the accused punished, especially when it comes to high-profile politicians like Sheikh Hasina. Incumbent Premier Khaleda Zia and many others in her cabinet, too, were implicated in graft cases filed by the Hasina government, but those cases did not come close to punishing the accused. With the BNP back to power, graft cases against its top leaders now seem buried.

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