

India's democracy forced to deal with military neighbours

AFP, New Delhi

Often hailed as a beacon of democracy among developing nations, India's overriding business and security needs have forced it to overcome a reluctance to deal with military regimes, analysts say.

The latest sign of this real politik was the red-carpet welcome afforded this week to Thailand's military-installed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, making a first official visit to India for talks heavy on trade.

India's reaction to last September's coup in Thailand was a diplomatic "wait and watch" – something independent analyst C Uday Bhaskar said highlighted years of steady but nonetheless dramatic changes in New Delhi's foreign policy.

"India did have a sense of discomfort that was most pronounced in the 1980s," Bhaskar said of India's traditional disdain for men in uniform and politics.

"The revamp of Indian policy began in the 1990s, when it was

decided that Indian national interests would be paramount," he said, explaining that India was now far more "nuanced" in its diplomacy due to its often conflicting ideals and interests.

Just a year ago, US President George W Bush said "America and India would bring the light of freedom to the darkest corners of our Earth," and that "India has an historic duty to support democracy around the world."

But it is not as simple as that, said former foreign secretary Salman

Haider. "India's earlier idealism has become increasingly tempered by pragmatism," he said, saying practicality alone was a good enough reason for India to adapt its foreign policy.

Apart from Thailand, India has close dealings with the military junta in neighbouring Myanmar, which has been helping the Indian army deal with separatist rebels operating in India's remote northeast.

Bangladesh, now run by a military-backed emergency government, is also a neighbour. And India has to deal with arch-rival Pakistan and President Pervez Musharraf, not the first military general to govern the nation after a coup.

"India disapproved of the coups there but dealt with these governments, as there was no alternative," said Haider.

Another former Indian diplomat, S Shashank, noted that India – which actively campaigned for the expulsion of Pakistan from the Commonwealth grouping after Musharraf's coup in 1999 – did not oppose its readmission in 2005.

"We had re-started talks with Pakistan (in 2004) and Islamabad had promised to rein in Islamic militants acting against India," Shashank said, explaining India's turnaround.

Former Indian ambassador to Myanmar G Parthasarthy noted that New Delhi had kept the military junta at arms length after the 1988 coup, but then changed track when India realised its security interests were in jeopardy.

"Insurgents from India's northeast were taking shelter there (in Myanmar). Drugs were coming into India from Myanmar."

"There are instances of Myanmar soldiers being killed fighting Indian insurgents in the jungles there. Our policy of engagement has paid off," he said.

Fears of China's assertive diplomacy in the region had also contributed to India's rethink, he added.

India's top diplomat Shivshankar Menon is heading for talks this week in Bangladesh, with democracy again seemingly off the agenda.

An editorial in the Indian Express on Monday cited the military-backed regime's willingness to combat religious extremism, crackdown on Indian insurgent groups and provide trade transit facilities.

If Bangladesh is ready to cooperate on these more overriding matters, the paper said, "India should be prepared to walk the extra mile."

In Karachi, one person was electrocuted by power lines brought down by the cyclone overnight, hospital officials said. Officials say another eight have been killed in Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital.

Kechh. Authorities said they were trying to get supplies to more than 1,300 car and bus passengers who were stranded when swollen rivers washed away bridges on two key roads.

Continuing rain was hampering aid efforts, said provincial government spokesman Razia Bugti. "People need more assistance. We have relief helicopters ready but the weather is not permitting," he said.

Bugti said 12 people had been confirmed killed so far in Baluchistan but added: "I think the casualties may be high."

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He said water in the area's main dam had reached dangerous levels. "We are hungry, we are thirsty, the authorities say they are sending helicopters but we have not seen any," said Hamal Baloch, also from

Kechh. The situation is grave here. People including women and children have been clinging on to trees and rooftops since late Tuesday," Jahangir Aslam, from the town of Turbat, told AFP.

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Musharraf urges tribes to expel Al-Qaeda

AFP, Islamabad

Former Pervez Musharraf told tribesmen from a troubled border region that they would cause international embarrassment for Pakistan if they failed to expel Al-Qaeda "terrorists", a report said.

Military ruler Musharraf, a key US ally, told a jirga or grand tribal meeting in the northwestern city of Peshawar late Tuesday that they must live up to peace deals under which they agreed to oust foreign rebels.

Musharraf faces international pressure to crack down on insurgents based in the semi-autonomous tribal belt, who are

allegedly involved in global terrorism and cross-border attacks on foreign forces in Afghanistan.

"Foreign terrorists are the biggest threat to our country and therefore they have to be flushed out," the official Associated Press of Pakistan quoted Musharraf as telling Xinhua.

Pakistani authorities signed peace deals involving tribal elders and militants in the South Waziristan area in 2005, in North Waziristan in 2006 and the Bajaur area in March 2007.

The crackdown focused on closing down online gambling, loan sharking, cross-border prostitution and drug dealing, said a spokesman with the Guangdong public security department on Wednesday, according to Xinhua.

Police also confiscated 159 guns, a huge stash of illegal drugs and more than 9,000 vehicles, he said.

"The crackdown aims to maintain social stability in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, and to ensure a peaceful environment for the celebrations for the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland," the spokesman said.

Redwan on 4-day remand

FROM PAGE 1

"The real party is where the party president and secretary general are."

On Oli's allegation that

Badruddoza did not practise

democracy and did not support joint

leadership in the party, Badruddoza

said, "The allegations are moti-

vated."

He raised counter allegation

against Oli for "playing hide and seek" while naming the party and for "dividing the country".

"The party constitution he [Oli]

had formulated was against the

spirit of our constitution,"

Badruddoza said, adding, "Colonel

Oli planned to divide the country into

11 provinces."

LDP Secretary General Mannan

described what Oli told about them

as "very unfortunate". "When I went

to his house on Tuesday to minimise

difference between Prof

Badruddoza and him, he proposed

me to join him," Mannan said.

"If you do not join with me, you

will not get the taste of power,"

Mannan told reporters quoting Oli.

Showing documents Mahi said,

"When Colonel Oli went to the

Electoral Commission for naming the

party, he named it 'Liberal

Democratic Party', not Liberal

Democratic Party."

When contacted for his com-

ments on this, Oli told The Daily Star

that it was a typo and "not a big

thing". "If anyone makes a mistake

while writing his father's name, his

father does not change," he said.

The LDP executive president on

Tuesday night claimed that

Badruddoza and Mannan had quit

the party. The surprising announce-

ment came at a press conference at

LDP President Member MA

Zinnah's Gulshan residence.

Former president Prof

Badruddoza former Bikalpa Dhara

Bangladesh on March 10, 2004, but

he abolished the party to form the

LDP on October 26, 2006 with Oli

Ahmed and a few other BNP leaders

who left the BNP.

filed in December last year.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Shariful Islam, also the IO, submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's), Dhaka showing 13 people as prosecution witnesses.

Pintu's other accomplices are Shahin, Jasim, Mohammad Ullah Palash, Shiplu, Hasu, Ali Hossain, Khokan alias Roxy Khokan and Kala Alamgir.

According to the prosecution, a group of Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders and activists led by Pintu attacked the activists of Jubo League when they were pasting posters in favour of Awami League (AL) leader Haji Selim on the wall at Palasai crossing at around 11:30am on December 29 last year.

He joined the BNP in 1991. Before that, he was involved in Jatiya Party politics.

Redwan held different portfolios

as a state minister during the imme-

diate past government's rule and left

BNP to be with the LDP on the last

day of the tenure.

PINTU CHARGESHEETED

Lalbagh police yesterday pressed

charges against Pintu and eight

others in an attempted murder case

filed in December last year.

Following the information, law enforcement agencies including Rapid Action Battalion rescued the victim. The next day, an AL activist Erfan filed an attempted murder case with Lalbagh Police Station against Pintu and eight others.

BABAR CASE

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed Monday for hearing on charge framing against Babar in connection with a case filed for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition at his residence.

Judge Sayed Zahid Mansur of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-9 set the date and directed the jail authorities to produce Babar before the court on that date.

SI Helal Uddin of Gulshan Police Station filed the case against Babar on June 3 under the Arms Act.

6X4



President Iajuddin Ahmed offers Munajat after inaugurating a memorial to the liberation war martyrs in Munshiganj yesterday. The names of the martyrs are inscribed on the memorial.

CG has put 'press advice' on media
Says Prof Salam
DU CORRESPONDENT

The present caretaker government has put "press advice" on media with directions of news coverage though it claims itself journalist-friendly, Prof Sheikh Abdus Salam, chair of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University, said yesterday.

"We have witnessed incidents of cancelling newspaper declaration and journalist arrest in the regime of this government like the tenure of BNP or Awami League government," he observed.

Prof Salam was delivering Bard Journalist Monajatuddin Memorial Lecture titled 'Journalism and newspaper in Bangladesh-India: Growing up through long struggle' at Bishwa Sahitya Kendra in the city on the 62nd birth anniversary of the noted journalist who roamed across the North Bengal in search of investigative stories throughout his career.

Prof Salam said during the tenure of BNP-Jamaat coalition government, even a number of ministers attacked the media when they were unhappy over the news coverage. The newspapers were under pressure due to those ministers and their cadre groups.

Since 1990-91, the media in the country have been enjoying partial freedom, as the then caretaker government repealed some sections of Press and Publication Act. But freedom of the press is yet to be ensured as some restrictions and conditions, including newsprint distribution, advertisement circulation and conditional freedom remain, he said.

Chahor Sangbadik Monajatuddin Smriti Sangsad organised the lecture presided by economist Dr Atiur Rahman while Justice Ghulam Rabbani was present as the chief guest.

Justice Ghulam Rabbani said the country now needs a journalist like Monajatuddin to raise awareness against corruption against the backdrop of massive landslide in Chittagong thanks to some unscrupulous people's activities and embezzlement of relief corrugated iron sheets by politicians.

He said the Sangsad will arrange training programmes for young journalists so that dedicated journalists like Monajatuddin can come out in future. Journalist Dinesh Das, also general secretary of the Sangsad, moderated the programme.

Maoists torch Rly station in W Bengal

AFP, Ranchi

Maoist rebels in eastern India have torched a railway station and kidnapped rail staff, police said yesterday as a blockade aimed at halting government plans to establish special economic zones entered a second day.

The strike in the impoverished states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Bihar is part of an increasingly determined effort to prevent the setting up of the low-tax business hubs designed to lure foreign investors.

NATURAL CALAMITIES

Create mass awareness at earliest to reduce casualties

Says health adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Adviser Dr ASM Matirahman on Tuesday stressed the need for creating mass awareness about the impending natural calamities at the earliest.

He was addressing the inaugural session of a three-day workshop titled 'Sharing of experience on early warning system and BDRCS cyclone preparedness programme (CPP)' as the