

# 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 north-east 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."

## Crime crackdown ahead of HK handover anniversary

AFP, Beijing

A crackdown on organised crime in southern China ahead of the 10th anniversary of the Hong Kong handover has seen more than 24,000 suspects arrested, Chinese state media reported yesterday.

The 50-day "Thunderbolt 07" operation in China, Hong Kong and Macau has broken 1,400 gangs, cracked 10,942 criminal cases and arrested 24,860 people, Xinhua news agency reported.

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.



Ambassador of Japan Masayuki Inoue calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday.

# Pakistan cyclone leaves 21 dead, 250,000 homeless

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani rescuers struggled yesterday to reach 250,000 people left homeless, and in some cases clinging to rooftops and trees, by a cyclone that lashed the coast and killed 21 people.

Cyclone Yemyn roared in from the Arabian Sea on Tuesday, days after thunderstorms left around 230 people dead in Karachi and nearly 150 people were killed by rains in neighbouring India.

The UN said the destruction in South Asia -- plus floods in Britain and heatwaves in southern Europe -- showed that the world must be better prepared to cope with the impact of climate change.

"The cyclone and the rain have left around 250,000 people homeless," Khuda Bakhsh Baloch, the relief commissioner of badly-hit

Baluchistan province, told AFP, adding that dozens of villages were underwater.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz ordered the immediate airlift of blankets, food, tents and medicine because several main highways had been badly damaged, an official statement said.

Telephone links were down to most of the affected region but residents who could be contacted in Kechh, one of Baluchistan's worst affected districts, said they had seen no sign of aid-bearing helicopters.

"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.

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

## LDP finally splits

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"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 motivated."

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 with 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 Election Commission for naming the party, he named it 'Liberall Democratic Party', not Liberal Democratic Party."

When contacted for his comments 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 announcement came at a press conference at LDP Presidium Member MA Zinnah's Gulshan residence.

Former president Prof Badruddoza formed 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.

# Musharraf urges tribes to expel Al-Qaeda

AFP, Islamabad

President 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 the meeting.

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.

# Redwan on 4-day remand

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After hearing both the sides, the court rejected the defence petition and placed Redwan on a four-day remand.

The army-led joint forces on Tuesday night arrested Redwan from the city's Baridhara area.

Sources in the forces said they picked up Redwan soon after he came out of LDP leader Col (ret) Oli Ahmed's press briefing at 9:30pm.

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 immediate 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.

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 Jatiyatbadi 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 Palasi crossing at around 11:30am on December 29 last year.

Pintu along with his four bodyguards picked up Jubo League leader Sarwar Hossain Tipu from

the spot and injured him by ruthlessly beating with a firearm.

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 Jahed 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.



PHOTO: PID

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.

# Road accidents kill five

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed and 30 others injured in separate road accidents in Pirojpur, Jhenidah and Manikganj yesterday.

Our correspondent from Barisal adds: Two people, including the central committee member of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), were killed in a road accident on Pirojpur-Mathbaria highway at Jhawtala under Mathbaria upazila in Pirojpur district yesterday.

The dead identified as Mashiur Rahman Mithu, 29, a central leader of BCL, and Mustafa, motorcycle

rider, were killed when a Pirojpur-bound passenger bus from Mathbaria hit a motorcycle at about 1:30pm.

Witnesses and family members said Mashiur was going to Mathbaria from Bhandaria by a rented motorcycle.

Mustafa died on the spot and Mashiur succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital.

The angry people blocked the Mathbaria-Pirojpur road disrupting traffic movement following the accident.

Our correspondent from Jhenidah adds: Two people, including a minor boy, were killed and 10 others injured in a road accident at Balipara under Kaligonj upazila in the district yesterday.

The victims were identified as Emon, 7, son of Kamrul Islam of Mollakua village, and Fetu Mia, 35, of Bishoy Khali village.

Locals and police said a Jhenidah-bound passenger bus from Jessore and a truck coming from opposite direction collided, leaving Emon and Fetu Mia dead on the spot and 10 others injured, five of them critical.

The seriously injured are Moin,

30, Abdul Jabbar, 36, Mukul, 33, Lutfunnesa, 50, and driver Atiar, 38.

The injured were rushed to Jessore Hospital.

Our correspondent from Manikganj adds: One child was killed and 20 others were injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj yesterday.

The victim was identified as Sakib, 1, son of Abdul Malek of Bhatbaur village under Manikganj Sadar upazila.

Police said the accident occurred at around 8:45am at Borongal under Shivalaya Police Station when a Dhaka-bound bus hit a passenger bus, leaving Sakib dead on the spot and his mother Shahana Begum injured.

Shahanaz was rushed to Manikganj Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

The body was sent to Manikganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

## NATURAL CALAMITIES

# Create mass awareness at earliest to reduce casualties

## Says health adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Adviser Dr ASM Matur Rahman 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 chief guest at a city hotel yesterday.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) organised the workshop to share the experience and gather knowledge about the warning system of natural disasters in the form of cyclone, tsunami, typhoon, earthquake and Katrina in different countries.

Expressing concern over the

recent landslides in Chittagong induced by heavy rainfall, the adviser said Bangladesh is vulnerable to not only cyclone but also to earthquake and tsunami.

The workshop would benefit us with new learnings to face new challenges, said the adviser.

The CPP was initiated in 1972 following the major cyclone of 1970 that killed around five lakh people and made millions homeless. Its operation has been extended to 31 upazilas of the cyclonic high-risk coastal areas, the adviser said.

Appreciating the role of about 1.60 lakh volunteers of BDRCS, its Secretary General M Shafiul Alam said that they disseminate accurate warning for the local population, assist in their evacuation, sheltering, first aid and relief.

Speaking on the occasion, Selvaratnam S, head of the delegation in Bangladesh, International Federation of Red Crescent Society, pointed out that the natural calamities cannot be stopped, however, the number of casualties can be reduced through early warning.

Md Abdur Rob, chairman, BDRCS and Drew Strobel, senior field representative, American Red Cross in Thailand, also spoke in the inaugural session.

The workshop will conclude tomorrow with the participation of representatives from Red Crescent Society member countries, including Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the United States of America.

# 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.

Charon 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.

Atiur Rahman, president of the Charon Sangbadik Monajatuddin Smriti Sangsad, said throughout his career, Monajatuddin spoke of common and disadvantaged people. He showed us the real pictures of economic and social imbalance.

He said the Sangsad would arrange training programmes for young journalists like 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.

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